



## 2 Peter Chapter One

### Summary of Chapter One

As with his first epistle, Peter names himself as its author and greets his readers with warmth and affection through the grace of God given to them through their knowledge and acceptance of Jesus as the Christ.

Peter reminds them that they have been graciously given all the things they need for a life of peace and hope in Christ, and that God has lifted them out of the world of evil desires that had so dogged mankind since the fall. This was done through divine power for their sake, not God's.

Because of this free gift of grace, Peter exhorts them to a holy lifestyle that will be pleasing to God. Peter lists several of the qualities they are to display in order to achieve this. The outcome of this lifestyle will be to bring glory to God as they will live their lives effectively for Christ.

Peter, who was writing from a Roman prison under sentence of death, reminds them that all that was foretold by the OT prophets in the Scriptures had been fulfilled in Jesus as the Christ of God. Peter had been an eye witness of this and cites particularly his experience of being with Jesus at his transfiguration on the Holy Mount.

### I. 2 Peter 1:1-2 - Initial Greeting

Peter's greeting is concise and to the point, identifying the author and the audience, and expressing a blessing. Unlike his first epistle, Peter does not name the regions where his readers live and thus we cannot know for sure who they were. However, there is strong evidence later in the letter that leads us to conclude it was intended for the same churches located in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey.

<sup>1</sup> Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

## 2 Peter 1:1

Simon Peter. Many translations use the Hebrew spelling Simeon, as used by James at the Jerusalem Counsel: <<*Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name*>> (Acts 15:14 NASB). We recall that it was Christ who renamed Simon as Peter: <<*The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter)*>> (John 1:41-42). See also comments made of 1 Peter Chapter 1.

Peter, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, is writing to those who have a faith of equal standing, showing that all believers share equal privileges before God. This standing was accomplished by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Paul concurs: <<*For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith”*>> (Romans 1:17).

As a servant of his Lord, he acknowledges his true status. This is a worthy position for all disciples: <<*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me*>> (John 12:26), and one that others laid claim to, including, the Lord’s mother: <<*“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her*>> (Luke 1:38), the disciples in Jerusalem: <<*Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness*>> (Acts 4:29), Paul confirms the role of disciples and apostles as servants: <<*What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task*>> (1 Corinthians 3:5), <<*Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord*>> (Colossians 4:7), and: <<*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings*>> (James 1:1). It was true of the OT people as well: <<*But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house*>> (Numbers 12:7), <<*David said, “O LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me*>> (1 Samuel 23:10), and: <<*When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”*>> (Daniel 6:20), to name but a few.

Righteousness refers here to God’s saving righteousness, showing that faith is a gift from Jesus. This is the true gift of grace that saves that too few attain to: <<*“For many are invited, but few are chosen”*>> (Matthew 22:14), but the recipients have received a faith as precious as ours, and is further explained by Paul: <<*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his*>>

*blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus>> (Romans 3:21-26).*

Jesus is called God and Saviour, making this one of the clearest NT declarations of the divinity of Christ. Thomas recognised this after having his doubts removed: <<*A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”>> (John 20:26-29). It is given further apostolic confirmation by Paul: <<*while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ>> (Titus 2:13).**

**<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**

## 2 Peter 1:2

Grace and peace be yours in abundance is much more than just an apostolic blessing as it is the fulfilment of a promise that was part of the coming of the Messiah: <<*The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly>> (John 10:10 21st Century KJV).*

Grace, we should recall, is the unmerited favour that God pours out on us so freely. The Lord’s brother offers a similar prayer to his readership: <<**Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance**>> (Jude 2).

In his initial blessing of those to whom he writes, Peter mentions a recurring idea in the letter: true knowledge of God and of Jesus. Verse 2, like v.1, points to the deity of Christ, for both God and Christ are the object of this knowledge. It also shows the independence of these two persons of the triune Godhead. In v.21, Peter will introduce the third person, the Holy Spirit, showing his full acceptance of the Holy Trinity.

This knowledge is deeper than just knowing about God and Jesus, as Paul explains: <<**What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ**>> (Philippians 3:8); it is about the personal relationship that the believer has established with God through Jesus by faith and the acceptance of him as being sovereign over a believer’s life that will lead to eternal salvation. Such knowledge comes from, and is strengthened by, Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit, as confirmed by the prophet: <<**They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea**>> (Isaiah 11:9), which pictures a time when the knowledge of God will cover

the land like a great flood, allowing peace to finally break out among those who believe through that knowledge.

Ultimately, the true knowledge of God comes when an individual actually believes that God came in human flesh, suffered and died, then rose again from death *for them* as an individual. Once they have accepted that truth and have responded by giving all that they have and are to the work of God's Kingdom, and in service to Christ, that is, to be able to say 'He is *my* God', then they will have knowledge of the truth and the truth will set them free from all the perils of this life.

## II. 2 Peter 1:3-11 - Making One's Calling and Election Sure

In this first main section of his letter, Peter emphasises that God's grace results in godliness in the believer who embraces Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Peter had already taught on faith in his first epistle; here he focuses on the resulting changes in a believers' life, through their good works and lifestyle choices, that will confirm their conviction in the faith.

### II.a 2 Peter 1:3-4 - God's power exercised on our behalf

God has provided blessing for the Christian in all things pertaining to life. God's grace abounds to all who will turn to him through Jesus Christ. All the promises of God are then made available to those who believe and trust in God, which he does for the benefit of mankind and not for his own reward.

<sup>3</sup> His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

#### 2 Peter 1:3

Divine power. God himself has acted in his infinite power to accomplish salvation, something only he could accomplish and what human ability could never have accomplished. Paul paints a similar picture: <<*I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength*>> (Ephesians 1:18-19). All believers are equipped with the power of God through the Holy Spirit, who indwells them because of their declaration of faith, baptism of repentance and submission in all things to Christ: <<*For in him you have been enriched in every way – in all your speaking and in all your knowledge – because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful*>> (1 Corinthians 1:5-9).

Our knowledge of him. David was a man who was intimate in his relationship with God with good reason: <<*Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you*>> (Psalm 9:10).

Who called us by his own glory and goodness. Believers are called to live in harmony with God's own moral character. The references to God's glory refer back to OT passages narrating the manifestation of the presence and glory of God in theophanies; that is, appearances of God in the tabernacle, or the temple. The prophet speaks of a time when God's glory will light the entire cosmos: <<*The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end*>> (Isaiah 60:19-20), which was also reflected in Christ's revelation to John: <<*The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp*>> (Revelation 21:23).

It is the glory of God's divine power to convict and convert sinners; this is the power and glory of God, which are seen and experienced in his presence: <<*I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory*>> (Psalm 63:2); this power or virtue is to be extolled by all that are called out of darkness into marvellous light: <<*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*>> (1 Peter 2:9).

The word goodness, Greek aretē, also means virtue or excellence, and was used by Greek writers to describe the sum of all desirable character qualities.

We must remember that we never asked for the Gospel, for it was beyond our imagination to do so. It was given to the whole world so freely by a God who wanted to reconcile those who had been created in his own spiritual image back to himself, despite their natural inclination to sin, whereas he is pure and holy. Therefore, he alone deserves all the glory and we must never try to bring glory to ourselves for this or anything else. It had always been man's inclination to bring glory on himself for his own achievements, so to prevent this God had reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 men to just 300 to fight over 100,000 battle hardened Midianites: <<*The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'*" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained>> (Judges 7:2-3). This was then reduced further for: <<*The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands*>> (Judges 7:7a).

<sup>4</sup> Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

## 2 Peter 1:4

Peter goes on to encourage their faith and hope in looking for an increase of grace and peace, because the same glory and virtue are employed and evidenced in giving the precious promises of the Gospel that are exercised in our effectual calling. They are truly precious as they are a promise of eternal life in the presence of God for those who accept the call by faith.

God has granted believers his very great and precious promises. They are precious because they are the promises of God and not of man, and they are completely unmerited - a free gift of grace. It is through these promises that they participate in the divine nature or become partakers in it, using the Greek word *koinōnos*, which means sharer or partaker. They never become part of God, but amazingly they share in his nature as they become increasingly like him.

These great promises include the promises Peter identifies in his Pentecost message in Acts 2:14-41, especially the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in new power. They also include other promises such as likeness to God: <<*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*>> (1 John 3:2), Christ's return (2 Peter 3:4), eternal life in heaven, and more broadly, all the promises of Scripture that relate to the gift of new life.

One of the great promises of Jesus was soon fulfilled and has been of great value to so many true believers ever since - the gift of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers: <<*But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*>> (John 14:26), and: <<*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*>> (Acts 1:8).



Divine nature uses terms familiar to Peter's Hellenistic readership to help them understand the idea of transformation into the image of Christ. Peter emphasises the moral focus of the believer's transformed life. At conversion, Christians are delivered from the corruption of this world, which is rooted in sinful desire.

Martin Luther writes that, 'divine nature is eternal truth, righteousness, wisdom; eternal life, peace, joy, happiness, and whatever good one can name. Whoever then becomes a partaker of the divine nature, attains all this, that he is to live forever, and have eternal peace, delight and joy, and is to be perfectly pure, just, and triumphant over the devil, sin and death'.

### II.b 2 Peter 1:5-7 - Making every effort to live a godly life

Peter lists qualities that characterise a life participating in the divine nature. These verses contain a straightforward catalogue of biblical virtues: <<*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,*

*faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law*>> (Galatians 5:22-23), and: <<*Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it*>> (Hebrews 12:10-11). This list does not reflect a legalistic code but rather the desires and features of a transformed heart, as confirmed by: <<*for this very reason*>> (v.5). The exhortations to live a new life are grounded in the divine power and promises that were granted to believers when they came to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

### 2 Peter 1:5

Add to your faith. Peter exhorts Christians not merely to confess faith in Christ but actually to live as he taught. He is not saying that works are a prerequisite for salvation but rather is arguing that faith must take concrete form in life: <<*This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone*>> (Titus 3:8). All the virtues listed in vv.5-7 are results of faith, so faith is listed first, while love, which is the ultimate result of faith, is listed last (v.7), and: <<*The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*>> (1 Timothy 1:5).

<sup>6</sup> and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup> and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

### 2 Peter 1:6-7

Self-control is a virtue that all believers need to try to master. There is a right time to show a range of emotions including anger, but there are also many wrong times. Lack of self-control can cause all sorts of harm and damage. In addition to controlling our emotions, we need to consider our life-style choices. There are many good things that God supplies in life but they should all be accepted in moderation, especially the likes of food and alcoholic drink. There are other temptations in the world that a believer has to abstain from completely.

Perseverance. It is a human trait for people to give up on many things that become difficult, time consuming, expensive or even uninteresting. Christians are called to be different. We are called to persevere in the trials and suffering that will inevitably come our way: <<*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers*>> (1 Timothy 4:16), <<*You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised*>> (Hebrews 10:36), <<*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him*>> (James 1:12), <<*Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our*

*Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life>> (Jude 21), and: <<You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary>> (Revelation 2:3).*

Godliness translates Greek eusebeia, which also can be used as devoutness, piety, or devotion to God, as Peter will later exhort them to be in the last days: <<*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives>> (2 Peter 3:11). Paul warns of the opposite effects from worldly virtues: <<But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them>> (2 Timothy 3:5).*

Brotherly kindness, love. These are wrapped up in one of the great commands that are so much a part of living a godly life: <<*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these>> (Mark 12:30-31). Love has to be evident throughout the church, with which Paul concurs: <<*Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other>> (1 Thessalonians 4:9), and then to reach far beyond into our communities. Why? <<For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life>> (John 3:16). Of the various gifts and graces, Paul concludes: <<*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love>> (1 Corinthians 13:13). When Jesus came he raised the standard for us all to aspire to: <<You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you>> (Matthew 5:43-44).***

## II.c 2 Peter 1:8-11 - Living an effective life for Christ

Peter explains the necessary relationship between regeneration and a life that reflects the virtues inherent in the knowledge of Christ. Without that relationship the believer cannot live a fruitful or productive life and will be drawn back into the ways of the world from which Christ has lifted him away.

<sup>8</sup> For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### 2 Peter 1:8

If you possess these qualities in increasing measure. A lifelong pattern of growth in Christ-like character is expected of Christians and is the key to fruitful ministry. By contrast, knowledge (Greek epignōsis) of Christ is ineffective and unproductive unless accompanied by a life that increasingly exhibits the qualities of vv.5-7.

These are all qualities that Christians are called to store in their hearts and then to display through their daily lifestyle choices. Anyone who consistently fails to demonstrate these qualities is not only seen to be ineffective and unproductive in their faith, they are actually bringing damage to the reputation of the God they have chosen to serve. There are some characters in Scripture who were notoriously bad, even kings; for example: *<<Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree>>* (2 Kings 16:2-4). No Christian would ever live their lives in that way, but if we choose to live a life that is not pleasing to God then he alone will judge how we appear in his eyes!

Those who truly believe in Jesus as the Christ and therefore are prepared to do his will, become both effective in their walk and fruitful because of it. This is the good works that are produced because of faith, not works to be done to achieve salvation for that is given because of faith alone. The Lord's brother says: *<<As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead>>* (James 2:26).

<sup>9</sup> But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

## 2 Peter 1:9

The one who lacks these qualities, i.e. does not have them, is spiritually blind and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his past sins: *<<But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life>>* (Titus 3:4-7). This lack of fruit could exist because a person's cleansing was merely an external reformation that did not come from a truly changed heart. But it could also describe a genuine Christian who has fallen into serious error regarding the Christian life. Only God knows the person's true status: *<<Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness">>* (2 Timothy 2:19).

Jesus had accused the Pharisees of spiritual blindness as they had expelled a blind man that Jesus had healed from the synagogue because they lacked faith in Jesus, or more likely saw him as a threat to their prominent and influential lifestyle: *<<Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains>>* (John 9:39-41). Elsewhere, Jesus also has strong words for those who remain spiritually blind: *<<Leave them; they are blind guides. If a*

*blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit*>> (Matthew 15:14), and: <<*You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked*>> (Revelation 3:17).

As someone who spent much of his adult life away from Christ, I find it easy to recall the difference in life the reality of salvation can make and just what a true gift of grace God has provided for me. Perhaps as time passes it can be easy to forget that first love and the feeling that the initial knowledge of God provides us with. However, it is not about feeling guilty and doing penance when we get it wrong, it is just a fundamental requirement that we try to keep our relationship with Christ at the forefront or rather the centre of our lives.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,

## 2 Peter 1:10

Christians should be diligent to confirm their calling and election (Greek eklogē). God calls believers to faith through the Gospel: <<*He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*>> (2 Thessalonians 2:14), <<*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight*>> (Ephesians 1:4a). But God's grace in salvation should not be taken for granted.

To make your calling and election sure is not necessarily as difficult as it may sound or some of us make it out to be. We need to be sure in our own minds and hearts that we have accepted God's free offer of grace for what it is. We must ensure that we are not just church goers because we enjoy being part of a crowd, or being accepted, or perhaps in a place that gives us prominence. It is not about work either or following a set of rules or making sure you spend a certain amount to time each day reading your bible and praying. The Christian life is one of enjoyable service to God and to others that is motivated by love of neighbour and of God, and it is about being willing to hand control of our whole lives, our possessions, our time and our resources to God and the purposes of his will.

Growing in the Christ-like virtues mentioned in vv.5-7 will give believers increasing confidence that God really did call them and really did elect them to salvation before the foundation of the world. Thus their election becomes sure, as a sure foundation. Those who practice these qualities i.e. do these things, will never fall, probably meaning apostasy or falling away from the faith, for: <<*The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself*>> (Proverbs 14:14 KJV). Good works are evidence of and give reassurance to our salvation, although they are never the basis for it. Faith is the means for which salvation is awarded and the good works an outworking of that faith. One sure test is evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit, which are worth repeating: <<*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law*>> (Galatians 5:22-23).

Even though we may be certain in our calling by God, as Gentile sinners it does us no harm to: *<<remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ>>* (Ephesians 2:12-13), and therefore to remain thankful to God for his grace and mercy upon us.

Peter's wording does not imply that true followers of Christ can ever apostatise; those who do so were never really called, elected, or born again. It is said of others that were called and then fall way: *<<It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned>>* (Hebrews 6:4-8).

<sup>11</sup> and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## 2 Peter 1:11

This way of life is the path into the eternal kingdom of Christ. Those who practice these qualities will be richly provided with the reward of eternal life. Some interpreters think rich welcome indicates degrees of blessing and reward, both in this life and in heaven. Others think that eternal life is itself the reward in view, in contrast to the prospect facing the false teachers. King David as always was thankful to receive a welcome of rich blessings: *<<You welcomed him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head>>* (Psalm 21:3).

## III 2 Peter 1:12-21 - Prophecy of Scripture

Peter contrasts the truth about Christ as revealed by God with the falsehood of man-made myths. In light of this certain truth, the church should be focused on living faithfully, according to the teaching through the Gospel and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### III.a 2 Peter 1:12-15 - Stirring up Christians to holiness

Thinking of his impending death, Peter urgently reminds the churches to continue living in a godly way. Peter would have seen this as a final opportunity to encourage these believers to endure any suffering they were facing and to keep focused on the ultimate prize for doing so.

<sup>12</sup> So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

## 2 Peter 1:12

I will always remind you. Although Peter's life was coming to an end, he was determined to finish the race and continue in his duty as God's servant by continuing to pass on everything that had been entrusted to him by the Lord, he had fed the sheep and kept watch over them: <<*I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest*>> (Isaiah 62:6).

Remind you, even though you know them. Good teachers are not afraid of repetition, as it aids understanding and also helps to keep the important lessons from Scripture and from God in the forefront of our minds and lives. Paul saw the importance of this too: <<*I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me*>> (Romans 15:15), and: <<*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you*>> (Philippians 3:1), as does the Lord's brother: <<*Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe*>> (Jude 5). The Lord himself reminded his disciples of what he had been teaching them: <<*Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also*>> (John 15:20).

The readers of this letter already know these godly qualities listed in vv.5-10, referred to as these things, and are already established in the truth concerning life in Christ. Peter's intent is simply to keep biblical morality and ethics in the forefront of the Christian's daily pursuits.

<sup>13</sup> I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, <sup>14</sup> because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

## 2 Peter 1:13-14

As long as I live. As the faithful shepherd, Peter is determined to keep reminding them, i.e. refresh your memory, of the Gospel truth they had been taught. Thus he was fulfilling his duty to Christ: <<*Jesus said, "Feed my sheep"*>> (John 21:17c).

The tent of this body is a term that was used to describe our mortal bodies that must die and decay. We know this will be replaced with the imperishable: <<*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands*>> (2 Corinthians 5:1). Paul goes on to say: <<*Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight*>> (2 Corinthians 5:6-7). Our body is just a dwelling place for our soul and it must be so during this life but we live in the hope and knowledge that one day we will shed this temporal dwelling for our soul to be brought into the very presence of our Father and Creator. However, this does not

mean we should not enjoy what we have in this life and want only to rush into the next.

Peter expects that his execution by Rome is imminent, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. The nearness of his death seems to have been recently revealed to Peter, which may have been by divine revelation or simply told to him by the authorities, prompting him to reflect on his conversation with Jesus over 30 years previously: <<*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!">> (John 21:15-19). Paul too accepted his imminent death with the same philosophical fortitude: <<*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing>> (2 Timothy 4:6-8).**

The manner that these two men and many more like them have displayed show that we have no need to fear death for Christ has overcome it in victory: <<*When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law>> (1 Corinthians 15:54-56). However, it is OK to be anxious over the manner of our death as that is for many people unpleasant. We should also be aware of what a great gift of God that our life is and try to make the most of what we have while we have it. For it does not last for long in this life: <<*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes>> (James 4:14).**

<sup>15</sup> And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

## 2 Peter 1:15

I will make every effort. Unless this was given to Peter by divine revelation, it is unlikely that he could ever have imagined just how true his words here are, both in terms of his two letters and his amazing life story that has encouraged and motivated so many believers over the generations since then.

There are many others that call on believers to make every effort, starting with the Lord himself: <<Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to>> (Luke 13:24), <<Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification>> (Romans 14:19), <<Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace>> (Ephesians 4:3), <<Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience>> (Hebrews 4:11), <<Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord>> (Hebrews 12:14), <<For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge>> (v.5), and: <<So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him>> (2 Peter 3:14).

My departure. Moses and Elijah had met with Jesus to speak of his departure from this world: <<Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem>> (Luke 9:30-31). Paul had also spoken of this as we noted in comments made on v.14.

Remember these things. Peter knows that his teaching is something they can recall in times of difficulty or during their trials so that they will be encouraged by his words and his excellent example of living for Christ.

### III.b 2 Peter 1:16-18 - Peter's preaching results from his own eyewitness experience

Peter recounts his personal experience with Jesus during the transfiguration: <<About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen>> (Luke 9:28-36a). See also Matthew 17:1-8 and Mark 9:2-8. He contrasts this truth with man-made myths. The content of Peter's preaching is not of human origin, but is based on direct revelation from God.

<sup>16</sup> We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

## 2 Peter 1:16

Cleverly invented stories or myths. This comes from the Greek word *mythos*, i.e. a story without basis in fact, a legend. The Gospel of Christ is no myth, in fact, believers are warned to keep clear of them: <<*This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth*>> (Titus 1:13-14).

Also, because the apostles were eyewitnesses of his majesty, and as Peter had said shortly after Christ's ascension when brought before the Sanhedrin because of his outspoken views on Jesus: <<*Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"*>> (Acts 4:18-20).

There are many who believe the Gospel to be fiction even if it does use real-life characters. However, they should look at situations like this where an intelligent man, who has nothing to gain as he faces death for his faith in Christ, continues to truthfully profess what he witnessed. If it were not true he could have saved his life by renouncing his faith but instead he was prepared to die for the truth. Luke, a former Gentile pagan, medical doctor and historian wrote: <<*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*>> (Luke 1:1-4).

Peter had observed the glory and majesty of Christ firsthand at the transfiguration, along with James and John Zebedee: <<*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete*>> (1 John 1:1-4). They knew that Christ had come in power; he was no mere literary character invented for a mythological narrative. But Jesus' transfiguration also functions as a prelude and anticipation of his coming in glory.

Readers learn in Chapter Three that the false teachers believed that the Second Coming was also a myth, but Peter refutes this, underscoring the certainty of Christ's return: <<*First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation"*>> (2 Peter 3:3-4). In Pisidian Antioch, Paul had also referred to such people by quoting the

**prophet:** <<Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you>> (Acts 13:41).

<sup>17</sup> For he received honour 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.”

## 2 Peter 1:17

He received honour and glory from God the Father. This is something God had promised from before the creation of the world: <<After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began>> (John 17:1-5), and God had given him the highest place in all of creation, as prophesied by King David: <<The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”>> (Psalm 110:1).

At the transfiguration, God displayed the honour and glory of his beloved Son, a declaration by the Father of Jesus’ divine sonship: <<I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father>> (Psalm 2:7), <<Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations>> (Isaiah 42:1), and at Jesus’ baptism: <<And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”>> (Mark 1:11).

Majestic Glory. A name for God the Father rather than heaven, emphasising the transcendence of his glorious presence: <<Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.” And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen”>> (Exodus 33:18-23).

This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. God could not help but be pleased with the perfection of his Son and his continuing faithful service in fulfilling the Father’s will in all he did. Jesus has said that we too can be like him and it must be the hope of all believers that one day they will hear the voice of God proclaiming he is well pleased with them too.

<sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

## 2 Peter 1:18

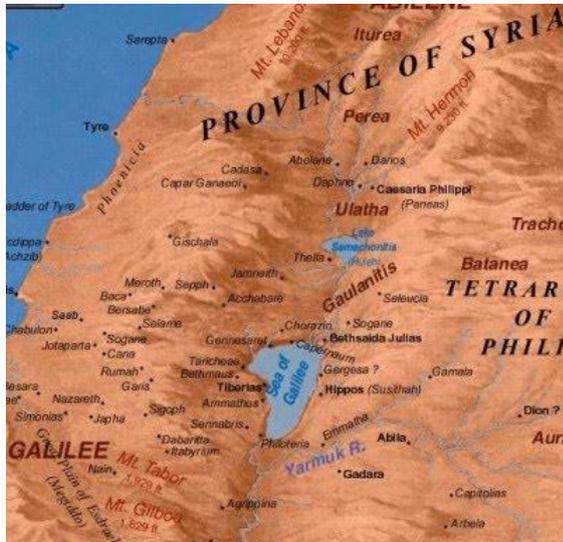
We ourselves heard. Peter emphasises his own eyewitness status, and that of the other apostles, with regard to the transfiguration: <<After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus>> (Matthew 17:1-8); he personally heard the voice of the Father declare Jesus to be his Son. If someone else had written this letter in Peter’s name, that person’s claim of eyewitness status would have been a lie for the only other person still alive to be able to claim this was the apostle John.

This was an occasion when God wanted selected people to hear his voice. There are occasions when he has spoken and some have heard the voice but not fully understood it: <<Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine>> (John 12:28-30), <<As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone>> (Acts 9:3-7), and: <<About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me>> (Acts 22:6-9). We are not only called to hear from God, we are to understand what is being said as well!

Sacred Mountain. The mountain was sacred because of the presence of God. It is God that makes things holy or sacred, not the place or the object itself: <<“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground”>> (Exodus 3:5), <<The commander of the Lord’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so>> (Joshua 5:15), and: <<Send forth your

*light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell*>> (Psalm 43:3).

Church tradition identifies this as Mount Tabor about 12 miles or 19km from the Sea of Galilee and just 9km east of Nazareth. It stands at 613m or 2,011 feet above sea level, but most scholars favour Mount Hermon, outside of Galilee and rising 9,166 feet or 2,794m above sea level. See the images.



The map shows Mt Hermon to the north and Mt Tabor to the southwest of the Sea of Galilee



The image shows Mt Tabor one of the possible locations for the Transfiguration of Jesus



The image shows Mt Hermon which, at over 9,000 ft is a popular destination for skiers

After his transfiguration, Jesus spoke with his three apostles, Peter, James and John: *<<As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead”>>* (Matthew 17:9). He had a similar conversation with the wider group after Peter’s declaration that Jesus was the Christ: *<<Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Cæsarea Philippi. On the way he*

*asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him>> (Mark 8:27-30).* Jesus did not want rumours to spread that could have brought unwanted attention on him until after his ministry was completed. A confrontation with the Romans too soon would have made it difficult for his work to be completed. The Jews had been expecting a political or military Messiah, who was to come to restore the Kingdom of Israel to the status it once had in the times of King David and Solomon. It was a time in history where Israel had power, wealth and influence in the world, all because God had chosen them to be his people, and they longed for that status once again, without realising that what Jesus was actually offering was of far greater value, and was in fact what had always been promised to them by God, and that was eternal life in the Kingdom of Christ and not some small earthly kingdom. Such is the puny mind of mankind that they can never really imagine what they can attain to other than that which the world offers them visually and materially. Peter is here trying to tell them that this is what their faith is really about, whether their biological heritage was Jew or Gentile.

III.c 2 Peter 1:19-21 - Truth about Jesus Christ anchored in the prophetic word of Scripture

The truth about Christ is based on the prophecies of Scripture, something even more certain than or just as sure as, eyewitness testimony. From the time of Moses, through the periods of the judges and kings, right up to the time that a remnant of Jews started to rebuild their lives in the Holy Land after Babylonian exile, the prophets of God, through the Holy Spirit, had time and again foretold the coming of the Messiah, how he would be rejected, and then suffer at the hands of Israel but, despite all this, he would still be the saving light for the whole of mankind. These scriptures were proved to be genuine in the person of Jesus, who is the Christ of God.

**<sup>19</sup> And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, 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.**

2 Peter 1:19

In the contrast between we have and you will do well, Peter is apparently emphasising that the interpretation of the apostles (we) is to be regarded as authoritative for the church (you), who would do well to heed what they teach.

Made more certain. Some have understood that Peter's experience of the Transfiguration provides confirmation of OT prophecy, making the already sure prophecy of the OT even more certain, as confirmed by the experience of the Transfiguration. Others have understood it as an affirmation that the prophetic writings of the OT are even more certain than Peter's spectacular personal experience at the Transfiguration, thereby underscoring the complete reliability of written Scripture. In either case, believers are admonished to pay attention to the certainty of the prophetic word.

A light shining in a dark place. Before Christ came the world was a very dark place but King David found light in his God: <<*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path*>> (Psalm 119:105). This light came to all in the form of Jesus: <<*The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world*>> (John 1:9). Jesus then openly declared that he was true light: <<*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"*>> (John 8:12), but there are those who do not want to step into the light, and others that realise the true benefits of doing so: <<*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God*>> (John 3:19-21). There was a time when there was nothing but darkness: <<*And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light*>> (Genesis 1:3). This was before we had the sun to light our day time and it will be that way again after the Second Coming of Christ: <<*The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it*>> (Revelation 21:23-24).

Day dawns and the morning star rises both refer to the Second Coming. The Day of the Lord is the day of final judgment and salvation, as the OT often teaches: <<*Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labour. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. See, the day of the Lord is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it*>> (Isaiah 13:6-9), <<*You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it for the house of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the Lord*>> (Ezekiel 13:5), <<*Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty*>> (Joel 1:15), <<*Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light – pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?*>> (Amos 5:18-20). Jesus' Second Coming will not only be an objective event in history, it will also rise in your hearts as the full light of Christ's presence transforms the hearts of his church to perfect purity.

The morning star has been used to describe Satan: <<*How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!*>> (Isaiah 14:12), but Jesus is the true Morning Star, the last title that God gives himself in Scripture: <<*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star"*>> (Revelation 22:16).

What the believer holds on to is the fact that the day has dawned and the morning star now shines brightly, illuminating his soul, which is alluded to by King Solomon: <<*The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day*>> (Proverbs 4:18).

**<sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.**

### 2 Peter 1:20

Two main views of this verse have been proposed:

1. The first view understands the verse to explain the origin of the prophecies of OT Scripture, namely, that no prophecy of Scripture came about, that is, originates out of someone's own interpretation, or from someone's individual understanding of events, visions, or anything else; but rather, that all prophecy of Scripture came about from the Holy Spirit's leading (see v.21). This takes the Greek word *ginomai* in its most common sense, as meaning 'come into existence'. According to this first view, then, Peter is assuring his readers that all the OT Scriptures that pointed to Christ were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that the readers should pay close attention to them (v.19), perhaps in contrast to false teachers who were denigrating Scripture.
2. The second view understands the verse to be speaking of how OT prophecies are to be interpreted; therefore some translations render this verse, 'no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of or for one's own interpretation'. According to this second view, Peter is saying that one must interpret the OT Scriptures as they are interpreted by the apostles, and hence the interpretations of the OT by the false teachers should be rejected. Although this second view is possible, the first seems more likely, in light of the immediate context and Peter's overall emphasis on the authority of Scripture.

**<sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

### 2 Peter 1:21

This is a key verse for the doctrine of Scripture, indicating that Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, but at the same time men spoke God's words, using their own personalities, knowledge, background, vocabulary, and style. What we have here is that the Holy Spirit has brought prophesy through the OT and has inspired the apostles and others to write the history of prophetic fulfilment in the NT.

No biblical prophecy was ever produced or had its origin merely because a man wanted to prophesy, that is, by the will of man: <<*Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea*>> (Numbers 16:28). By this statement Peter is also rejecting the traditions that had been added by his Jewish forefathers who had misinterpreted Scripture and had added their own ideas of what it meant.

All believers in Christ too, whether they are an ordinary disciple or a well educated biblical scholar, must be wary against being dogmatic about their own interpretation. For me, there are but two interpretations of Scripture: that which the Holy Spirit intended when he inspired the author to write it down; and that which he intends for each of us when we read it or hear it read out for us. We are to try to discern what is being said, test it and apply it to our lives, but it should not be something we argue or fall out with others about. There are of course some aspects that cannot be disputed, such as Christ's substitutionary death, resurrection and other such facts. These are beyond dispute or negotiation. However, there are other interpretations that can be disputed, such as the statement of Jesus: *<<And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it>>* (Matthew 16:18), being interpreted by some to say that Peter then became the first Pope in Rome, or statements such as, 'if you don't speak in tongues you have not been baptised in the Holy Spirit. Such ideas, which appear in all church denominations, are merely human self-invention explanations.

The prophecy in Scripture was given only by God through men, who spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was the active, revelatory agent working within the OT prophets, and through their lives and circumstances as they prophesied. This was how God communicated his mind and his will to his people. There were also false prophets who were not from God and about whom he gave warnings: *<<This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord>>* (Jeremiah 23:16).

If anyone, irrespective of their beliefs or faith background, would take an object view of Scripture, taking all the aspects of its overall timeframe, the diversity of human authors from king and priest to fisherman and tax collector, the power and fluency of the writing styles, the accuracy and detail of the prophecies that have been fulfilled to date, and the overall coherence of the message throughout, they could not help but conclude that it is a marvellous piece of literature that was surely divinely inspired.

They were carried along implies that the inspiration of Scripture was invisibly directed by the Holy Spirit, although without overriding the personalities of the human authors. The prophet speaks from personal experience: *<<Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking. He said to me, "Son of man stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me>>* (Ezekiel 1:28-2:2). Thus Scripture is fully the Word of God, even though it is recorded in the words of human beings. The exact way in which this was accomplished remains a divine mystery. What is true of OT prophecy is true of all Scripture, as Paul confirms: *<<All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness>>* (2 Timothy 3:16).

In this first chapter, Peter exhorts his readers to hold on to the truth of God's Word, which they have accepted by faith, build the graces that are manifested by the keeping of God's Word, and evidence their faith through the good works that come from doing what his Word requires.

Peter will now turn his attention to the dangers of the false teachers that were and still are so prevalent in the Church of Jesus Christ.