

# Studies in Second Peter

## "Back to Your Future" Second Peter 1:12-21

### Introduction

When Peter remembered the past, he was reminded of his future:

1. In verses twelve through fifteen, Peter remembered the Upper Room, and he remembered breakfasting with Jesus on the beach after the resurrection. Both those times Jesus spoke about the manner of Peter's future death as a martyr.
2. In verses sixteen through twenty-one, Peter remembered seeing Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. The memory reminded him that in the future Jesus was returning in His Second Coming with power and glory to establish a kingdom on the earth.

When he remembered the past, Peter was reminded of his future. He wanted **you** to have this same perspective. He said "I will not be negligent to *remind you...*" (v12); "I think it is right... to stir you up by *reminding you...*" (v13); and, "I will be careful to ensure that *you* always have a *reminder...*" (v15).

Remembering the future encourages you to be both *helpful* and *hopeful*. We'll organize our thoughts around these two points: #1 Remember Your Future And You Will Be A Helpful Christian, and #2 Remember Your Future And You Will Be A Hopeful Christian.

- #1 Remember Your Future  
And You Will Be A Helpful Christian  
(v12-15)

In these opening verses, Peter was most definitely remembering Jesus' prediction of the manner of his death as a martyr. In the Upper Room, Jesus had said, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward" (John 13:36). Jesus was going to His death; Peter would follow later on. After Jesus rose from the dead, over breakfast one morning on the beach, He told Peter (in John 21:18-19),

John 21:18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."  
John 21:19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God...

It would be a martyr's death. A man named Clement, bishop of Rome and a colleague of Peter's, wrote a letter towards the end of the first century from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth. He mentioned the vicious persecution under Nero. He wrote,

"Peter... endured not one or two, but numerous labors; and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due him."

The other records of his martyrdom report that Peter was crucified; and a man named Origen said he was crucified upside down.

Peter remembered his future. Knowing his time on earth was short, he was motivated to **help** other believers. He could help believers in at least three ways: They could be *strengthened*, *stirred-up*, and *sure*.

You can be strengthened:

2 Peter 1:12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are **established** in the present truth.

The believers he was writing to "knew" and were "established in the present truth." It means that they were stable in their walk with the Lord. The presence of false teachers would serve to erode some of their stability so Peter wrote to keep on "always" reminding them of the "present truth." The "present truth" refers to the Gospel as taught by the apostles, what we now have as the Word of God.

You can be a stable Christian, but your stability can be eroded. You need to therefore be **strengthened** by being "always reminded" of God's truth.

You can be stirred-up:

2 Peter 1:13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to **stir you up** by reminding *you*,

2 Peter 1:14 knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

Peter referred to his physical body as "this tent." It's as good as description as you're going to get of what life is like this side of eternity. Your spirit and soul reside in a temporary dwelling that is subject to the ravages of time and decay until it's no shelter anymore. Your life in your tent is qualified by the phrases "as long as I am in this tent," and "shortly I must put off my tent." Life is brief at best.

Peter, nearing the death Jesus had showed him, wanted to "stir up" believers. "Stir up" means *to rouse from sleep*; it means you *shake* someone to wake them. The world is a dark place that invites you to sleep. Christians sometimes get spiritually drowsy and need to be shaken, **stirred-up** from their slumber.

You can be sure:

2 Peter 1:15 Moreover I will be careful to **ensure** that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

Peter used yet another word for his death: "Decease." It means *exodus*. He would be moving from one place to another.

Peter "ensured" that believers "always have a reminder" by writing his two letters and by providing the material for the Gospel of Mark. You can be **sure** of your future because you have the written word of God.

Peter was (and still is) wonderfully helpful. His remembering led him to want to remind you to be strengthened, stirred-up, and sure.

**You** can also remember the future and be a helpful Christian. Peter may have had a few more specifics regarding his death than you

have... But you have the same basic understanding of the future. You are in your tent. You don't know how long it will be until you put off your tent, but when you do it will be an exodus.

(I should add that some of us may not die at all. There will be a Rapture at some point by which those Christians who are alive will be transformed without ever dying and taken to heaven. Peter was talking about the general, usual course of events - especially since severe and deadly persecution was about to break out upon the Church).

Just one verse earlier in Chapter One Peter had encouraged you to think about the glorious "entrance" that will be "supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This **is** your future if you are a Christian; remember it and it will impact your life the same ways that it impacted Peter:

1. Remember your future and you will want to strengthen other believers. Life is too short for them to be tossed to-and-fro by false teachers. Warn them, just like Peter did, so they can go on being established in the truth that sets them free.
2. Remember your future and you will want to stir-up other believers. There's no time for slowing down or sleeping on the job as a Christian! Shake someone and encourage them to get *busy or busier* serving the Lord while there is still time.
3. Remember your future and you will want everyone to be sure of theirs. You'll study the Scriptures to be able to share with absolute confidence and certainty all things that pertain to a godly life.

Remember your future in eternity and you can't help but be **helpful** while you remain on the earth.

#2 Remember Your Future  
And You Will Be A Hopeful Christian  
(v16-21)

You'll be moving-out of your **tent** and into your **mansion!** You can be **hopeful** as you journey home.

Keep in mind that Peter was writing to break the influence that certain false teachers were having in the Church. One of their primary falsehoods was to deny the literal, physical Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth to establish the kingdom. The false teachers were insinuating that the apostle's teaching about the return of the Lord was his own private "fable" - something Peter made up that was too fantastic to be true.

The background for all of this is what occurred on what is called the Mount of Transfiguration. That isn't the name of the mountain; it is what happened to Jesus there. Let me read the account in the Gospel of Matthew:

Matthew 17:1 ...Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;

Matthew 17:2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

Matthew 17:3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Matthew 17:4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a revelation of His Second Coming to establish a kingdom on earth. Moses, Elijah, and the disciples represent the three categories of people who will be in the kingdom:

1. The disciples represent individuals who will be present on earth in their human bodies.
2. Moses represents saved individuals who have died or who will die.
3. Elijah represents saved individuals who will not experience death but be caught-up to heaven alive in the Rapture.

Peter commented on the Transfiguration in verse sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen:

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

2 Peter 1:17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2 Peter 1:18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

There are two things to note in Peter's commentary:

1. First: Peter, James, and John were "eyewitnesses" to the truth of the Second Coming. It was not a fable; it really happened.
2. Second: They were ear-witnesses to the truth of the Second Coming. The Second Coming was not Peter's private interpretation. It was God's interpretation!

In verse nineteen Peter applied this event to your everyday living on earth:

2 Peter 1:19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, 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;

There is a lot going on in this verse. We'll need to take it one phrase at a time.

"We have the prophetic word confirmed" can mean one of two things:

1. In some of your Bible's it is translated, "we have the more sure prophetic word." It could mean that the written Word of God is more certain than the experience of Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration.
2. But it can also mean that their experience was the final, crowning confirmation of everything that the written Word of God pointed to in the Old Testament.

The Word of God is always more sure and certain than your experiences. Anything you experience must be judged by God's written Word. In this case, however, I think what Peter meant was that the entire Word of God looks forward to the coming of Jesus in "power" and with "majesty" to establish His kingdom on earth. Their experience on the Mount of Transfiguration confirmed what the Bible everywhere teaches. And, after all, their experience on the mount

became a part of the written Word of God - both here and in the Gospels.

Peter was simply pointing out that the literal return of Jesus was not a recent fable invented or interpreted by the apostles. It is, in fact, the great prophetic theme running throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to the Revelation.

Then Peter said, "you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place." The world all around you is the "dark place." The "light" is Bible prophecy, shedding light on your journey homeward to heaven.

Then Peter said, "until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." The key here is to recognize that this is something that happens "in your hearts." It is something *subjective*; something *personal*. The word for "dawn" is a word used only here in the New Testament. It means *to shine through* and describes the first beams of light coming through the darkness. It refers to the first signs of daybreak.

"Morning star" is another word that occurs only here in the New Testament. True, Jesus is called the bright and morning star in the Revelation; but that is a different word. Peter probably does not have Jesus in mind in this verse. The "morning star" is the planetary body, usually Venus, that first reflects the beams of the rising sun at dawn. "Until the day dawns and the morning star arises" describes a single experience - The first signs of daybreak coming upon the earth.

Bible prophecy, when taken literally as it was intended, gives believers who are living in the darkness of this world the first signs of the coming new day when Jesus will return to establish His kingdom.

When Peter said this "arises in your hearts," he was talking about the **hope** you hold in your hearts that the Lord is coming quickly. You see the signs of the times and know that the Second Coming is near. The Rapture, which precedes the Second Coming, *is nearer still!*

The false teachers said Jesus was not returning. They wanted the believers to concentrate on enjoying the physical and material pleasures of this earth. Jesus was and is most definitely returning.

The hope of His return would keep believers safe from harm - like a light guiding them through the darkness until the full sunrise of the Second Coming.

I've had unbelievers tell me that you can interpret the Bible to predict almost anything. Believers often sensationalize prophecy with their own interpretations. Peter told you that you **can** trust it:

2 Peter 1:20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

2 Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as *they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

The prophecies recorded in the Bible are God's inspired Word. God used men to write them down; but they wrote exactly what God wanted written. The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is a beautiful, wonderful subject for your further study. The moving of God the Holy Spirit upon the writers was the primary factor, but in using human beings the Spirit worked in and through their diverse personalities and styles to still produce exactly what God intended.

Since God is the author of Bible prophecy, it is not subject to "any private interpretation." This means at least two things:

1. First, it means that the writers **did not** record their own personal interpretations of what God had revealed to them.
2. Second, it means that the writers **did** record God's own interpretation of the prophecies.

You see this especially in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is a book of prophecy filled with signs and symbols; but almost always, the sign or symbol is clearly identified or defined for you a few verses later. If it isn't identified or defined for you in the Revelation itself, you can find it elsewhere in Scripture.

You **can** trust Bible prophecy to the extent that you approach it as a single, unified system that God has already interpreted... And to the extent that you avoid sensationalizing it with your own ideas and interpretations.

I think a great deal of the discouragements and depressions that plague Christians are the direct result of their lack of true biblical hope. You will only be a **hopeful** Christian if you take the return of Jesus literally and seriously.

Conclusion

Keep going back to your future. Soon you will be moving out of your tent here on earth and into the mansion Jesus is busy preparing for you in heaven.

**Help** someone along the way, and hold onto your **hope** as you travel.