

2Peter 1:16-19 "Our Salvation Is No Blind Leap"

It's amazing to me how gullible people can be. It's even more amazing how people will put their eternal destiny on the line by believing things which are nothing more than fairy tales. It wasn't that long ago when Marshall Applewhite, affectionately known among his followers as Do, convinced them to follow his dream of leaving this world and going to the next by committing suicide as they expected to be beamed aboard the mother spaceship behind the comet Hale-Bop. This group was known as Heaven's Gate.

This tragedy out in California was met with both tears and sorrow for those who perished, as well as mockery. Despite the belief in extraterrestrial UFO's by a large number of people in this country many of those same people thought it was ludicrous to take your life in the hopes of actually meeting aliens. You talk about a blind leap of faith.

How did those people substantiate those dreams? They had no objective truth, no firm proof that this was true. They only had the conviction of an individual who believed himself to be in contact with these alleged extraterrestrials. And yet despite any proof, they truly wanted to believe, and so the facts didn't matter. 'Don't confuse me with the facts, I've already made up my mind.'

In our text this morning the apostle Peter says, the facts do matter. The truth is always to be sought especially as it relates to where we will spend eternity.

I couldn't help but be amused, at the time, when so many in the news media were beside themselves trying to figure out how intelligent people could commit suicide in the hopes of finding life. They couldn't figure out how anyone in their right mind could believe such nonsense.

And yet, how many of the cults today are cut out of the exact same fairy tale cloth. How many people have placed their eternal destiny in the hope that in the 19th century a man received golden tablets which promoted the teachings that our heavenly God and Father used to be a human being just like us.

And that over eons of time he evolved into a god through a process known as eternal progression. And that the gospel of this group is that we all will one day be able to follow in the footsteps of our god and become gods ourselves who will inhabit and propagate

other worlds as we birth more human species and allow them to become gods.

One of the early leaders of this cult created a couplet: "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be." (Lorenzo Snow)

This cult is known as the Mormons, or the Latter Day Saints. Quoting from an early edition of the Salt Lake Herald we read, "The Mormons believe that all men were born in the spirit world of the union of sexes having a literal father and a literal mother before coming into this world, that the spirits are just the same in the appearance as the body, that God is a married Being, [and] has a wife. The Latter-day saints believe that God is an exalted man, and that we are the offspring of Him and His wife."

So, where's the outrage of people today to this sort of fairy tale religion? Well, unless Mormons begin committing suicide en-masse there probably will never be any outrage despite the fact that the wrong gospel separates people from God forever.

We could go through every cult in the world and find the same sort of man-made fables to start a movement designed to attract followers, many of whom use the Christian Scriptures as a starting point. This is part of what Peter is addressing in this letter when he reveals how false teachers will try to enter into the church to introduce destructive heresies.

So, what makes Christianity any different? Well, Christianity is built upon facts and truth. First, it is built upon revelation from God which has proven itself true. Almost one third of the entire bible is prophecy, unlike any other book ever written.

From beginning to end, God's prophetic word has shown itself true. Over 300 Messianic prophecies alone have come true. From prophesying the birth place of Christ to the type of death He would suffer. The book of Daniel actually prophesies of the very day when Jesus would make His entry into Jerusalem marking the time in which He would be cut off as He was crucified.

This is part of the 70 weeks of Daniel. In Daniel chapter 9 it declares that from the time of the decree of King Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, to the triumphal entry of Christ, it would be 173,880 days on the Jewish/Babylonian calendar. That would be 483 years from that declaration. It just so happens that history has recorded the exact date that decree was given. March 14, 445 BC.

When you do the math, 173,880 days comes up exactly April 6, AD 32, which was the exact day Jesus did in fact enter Jerusalem dying that same week on the cross for our sins. There is no other religious organization that could ever claim such objective truth.

But we also have eye witnesses of the ministry of Jesus Christ who not only claimed to be God but proved Himself God throughout His ministry. Peter was just one of many witnesses. He was a man who was there and personally witnessed the miracles, the teachings of Christ and even the manifestations of God. One such incident is what Peter records for us here in our text.

2PE 1:16-18 "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. 17 For 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." (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35) 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."

The first thing we notice is what we touched on last week, and that is that Peter, along with the rest of the disciples with him, did not follow cleverly invented stories. In other words, Peter was not willing to lay aside his Judaism and his former way of life, according to the O.T. Scriptures, to just blindly go after someone making up stories about Himself unless that one could prove, from the O.T. Scriptures, in power, that He was in fact the Messiah.

But, Peter here in verse 16 also says he was an eyewitness of Christ's majesty. One of the reasons Peter brings this up is because in all likelihood many of the false teachers were accusing Peter of teaching nonsense.

Peter responds by essentially saying, 'that there are two other sources you can go to to corroborate my story.' You see Peter uses the pronoun "we" at the beginning of verse 16, which clearly shows that he was not the only one to witness the glory of the Lord.

Keep in mind too, that Peter is building his case for every believer that they might be encouraged to know with certainty that the God who came to redeem them, is the same God who will come back for them.

As we'll see later in this letter the false teachers have basically denied that this same Jesus will ever come back; the reason being that He never truly was the Messiah many claimed He was. This leaves the Christian community without hope and without a Savior. Because if Christ does not have the power to rise from the dead and ultimately return for us then He is no God at all, we are still in our sin.

It was Christ's return which every believer in the first century longed for. This is why Peter uses the particular event he witnessed first-hand. He was an eyewitness along with James and John of an extraordinary event. It's recorded for us in three of the Gospels. We'll look at in the Gospel of Matthew.

MAT 17:1-9 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. 4 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." 5 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!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." 8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. 9 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."

These 3 men were eyewitnesses of a number of things. The first thing recorded in Matthew 17 is that Jesus' appearance was changed to that of intense light, which Peter refers to in his letter as majesty.

This word majesty in the Greek implies greatness and magnificence. In the case of the transfiguration it was something which could actually be seen. In fact, the same Greek word is used when Jesus healed a boy possessed of a demon whom He delivered out of the boy.

LUK 9:43 "And they were all amazed at the greatness (majesty) of God."

You see, Christ's majesty and glory could be physically seen in a sense by the things which only God could do that no mere man can take credit for. Peter was there with the rest of the disciples to see these amazing things Jesus performed in the power of God.

It is essential that our faith is based upon the objective truth that these things actually happened and that there were actual eyewitnesses who beheld these things together with many others.

1CO 15:3-9 "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 9 For I am the least of the apostles..."

The apostle John also understands the necessity that what we believe is not some fairy tale, but that many others saw first-hand the power of God and the majesty of the One who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no man can come to the Father but by Me."

1JO 1:1-4 "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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 We write this to make your joy complete."

Again, notice that John, like Peter, uses the pronoun "we" and "us" when writing this account of what they saw. And the reason he makes mention of this is to assure us that our Messiah is real and the salvation He came to secure for us is real. He was there and can testify to it and he wrote that to make our joy complete. But back to our text.

2PE 1:17-18 "For 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." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."

They saw the majestic glory and they heard the word of God. "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." This was not some mass hallucination, any more than 500 people at one time were hallucinating when they saw the risen Christ at the same time, as Paul records in 1 Corinthians.

Peter knew that there were many false teachers who were creating doubt by raising the questions: 'were any of you there?', 'did any of you see this supposed glory in Christ?', 'has Jesus come back as He promised?' 'After all, it's been some thirty years since Christ died, where is He?'

Peter is saying, 'I have seen life beyond the grave in both Moses and Elijah. I have seen the majesty of Jesus, I heard the Father's voice. But, it wasn't the pepperoni, mushroom and anchovies pizza we had that morning. And if you don't believe me just ask John and James, both of whom are still alive.'

They were all on the holy mountain together. By the way, no one knows which mountain is being referred to here. Some scholars believe it to be either Mt. Herman or Mt. Tabor. In the final analysis, it makes little difference. What makes it holy is the fact that God was there.

This is the truth we hold to today which is why there is no one place that we consider sacred as though it is singled out by God that is best suited to worship Him. This is what Jesus told the Samaritan woman.

JOH 4:21,24-26 "Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." 25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." 26 Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Having set the stage for the validity of Christ's claims and ministry, as they were eyewitnesses to these things, Peter then goes on to explain that what he witnessed only verified what the prophets of old had already said concerning this Messiah.

2PE 1:19 "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."

Up to verse 19 Peter has been referring to himself, along with the other disciples who were eyewitnesses of Christ, now he uses the witness of the written word of God. He refers to the word of the prophets which was a common expression describing the O.T. Scriptures.

This would include specific prophecies concerning the Messiah but would also include all prophetic utterances given to God's spokesmen, whether found in Genesis or Malachi or any book in between.

But why does Peter bring this aspect of the word of the prophets into the picture after having described the transfiguration of Jesus Christ? Because it's related to the same person. All of the O.T. was written to point to the Messiah. You can go back to the Garden of Eden to see this after the fall of man.

God promised Adam and Eve that He would send the seed of the woman to crush the seed of the serpent. The seed of the woman found its fulfillment in the seed conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in a virgin named Mary; that one born who was Emmanuel, God with us.

The prophets testified of this truth. Jesus fulfilled this truth and Peter was there, along with scores of others, to see it fulfilled. But what does Peter mean when he says, "the word of the prophets made more certain,..."?

Peter was not one to believe something simply because he had a legitimate spiritual experience along with other people. Peter's first line of argument in defense of his faith came from the very Scriptures which he held to be true and given by the very God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

1PE 1:10-12 "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by

those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."

In that same letter he quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures.

1PE 2:6-7 "For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (Isaiah 28:16) 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious."

So, when Peter says that we have the word of the prophets made more certain, he is saying that those things which they have spoken in the past are true. Yes, we have seen their fulfillment, but when it comes right down to it, it is the written word which came from God long ago which testifies to what we have witnessed firsthand, the living Word, Jesus Christ.

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever. (Isa.40:8)

The word of our God includes both old and new testaments. We study the old to marvel at the continuity of God's promised plan from the beginning. We study the new to marvel at the faithfulness of God to fulfill those things which the prophets testified of as they all pointed to Jesus Christ.

This is why Peter continues in verse 19, "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."

To pay attention to it is to study and heed what it says. And the reason for this is that it is a light shining in a dark place. Isn't that what the psalmist says?

PSA 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

David's son, Solomon also understood this to be true.

PRO 6:23 "For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light,..."

The light of God's word reveals the darkness of sin in our lives. But simply to have our sin revealed is nothing to get excited about. The light which Scripture shines also shines on the One who can remedy our sin problem.

ISA 9:2 "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

Who do you suppose this light is? The same light Peter had witnessed first-hand whose majesty and glory was revealed throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ. This same Jesus, who said of Himself in the gospel of John, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (JOH 8:12)

This by the way, is the reason Paul encourages us to consider ourselves in Christ no longer part of the darkness which only destroys.

EPH 5:8-11 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."

But remember, Peter tells us to pay attention to these prophetic words until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, both references to His second coming. In other words, trust God's word to the end.

But what about this idea that the word of God is just words from men? After all, they say, 'men wrote the bible.' Peter responds for his readers and those false teachers who would propose such a notion.

2PE 1:20-21 "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 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."

Peter lays to rest any idea that the word of God, which we have in our possession, is some grand plan created out of the fertile imaginative minds of men.

If this is the case then we are to be pitied more than all people. We might as well join the Mormons. At least they teach we will rule our own planetary system one day. Or better yet, we should become Buddhists where we will be melded into the vast expanse of the universe where all things become one.

I mean, one fairy tale is as good as the next if the prophets we believe to have been inspired of the Spirit are no different than any other prophet who has given supposed revelation.

Why not believe the prophet Mohammed? Why not believe the prophet Buddha?, why not believe the prophets of any other religion in the world? Don't all paths lead to God? Does it make any difference who we believe or which God we hold to?

You better believe it makes a difference. It makes an eternal difference. The God of the Scriptures says this about Himself.

ISA 43:10-11 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me." 11 I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior."

Does it make a difference which God or which prophet of God you believe? Again, here's what the God, who proved Himself as the one true God, says.

ISA 45:21-22 "Declare what is to be, present it - let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. 22 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

Is there any other God who can prophesy of the future and bring it to pass? Is there any other God who can reveal Himself with power as He did with Israel? There are no other gods. If there are no other gods then there are no other prophets who can speak on behalf of God. Those prophets are liars and are false. To follow them is to follow death.

This is why we know the scriptures to be true. Next week we'll look more closely at this claim found in verses 20 and 21.

2PE 1:20-21 "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 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."

In the mean-time if we believe that this word is from God, how should we consider it? Again, I'll let Peter close this morning with what he knows to be true.

1 Peter 2:2-5 ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. ⁴ And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Just as sure as Christ fulfilled prophecy and proved Himself to be Messiah God, as He came into this world, born of a virgin some 2,000 years ago, He will come again. He said so.

Should we not be living each day as though He could come for us today? But if He waits we also know that He is just as faithful to be with us and strengthen us as we love and serve Him in the mean-time.

Our faith, our God, our Savior is no fairy tale and God expects us to approach this life as one's who know the truth and walk in the truth. False prophets come and go. But our true prophet, priest and king truly came and will truly come again. May we honor Him with lives of love and obedience until that day.