

Sunday – December 17th, 2017

Reflection & Preparation

God made Himself a body in which to dwell upon this earth for a short period of time so that He may do the Father's will. Once His purpose was accomplished He returned to His Father in heaven where He is seated at His right hand. But, before He returned, He had prepared a body, the church, to take up doing the will of God upon this earth for a short period of time. Because He arose so shall we. Because He lives so do we. Because He works in the lives of people so must we. Doing in our "body" as Christ did in His is what this life is all about, but, unlike Christ in His day, the fear is, we, in this Laodicean church age, generally fall short in the area of accomplishing what the "body" is supposed to be about.

That being the case and considering we are nearing the end of our journey of Daily in the word, our desire should be that we are now closer, and more surrendered, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Without doubt, nothing would please our enemy any more than knowing we've spent 365 days reading and meditating on the word of God, and yet remain the same place in our walk as where we began. In these final two weeks, may we yield our bodies as living sacrifices unto God as our reasonable service (Romans 12:1) yielding ourselves to His working in and through us as surrendered vessels and members in particular of the body, pressing on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Apart from Jesus, neither Paul or Timothy, or any of the other disciples, could have finished their course, and neither can we! Let us keep this in mind as we journey through the books of Titus and Philemon, revisit the Jews in the book of Hebrews, learn incredible lessons from James, and perhaps identify with Peter in this week's reading.

This week will be will definitely be a roller coaster of principles and application as we transition back and forth between doctrines concerning the church, and those of the "Hebrews" . As always, let's be sure we understand the context of each book, chapter, and verse we read throughout this week. Many a person has been led astray all because certain passages have been either misconstrued or misapplied due to the misrepresentation of proper context. Let that not that be said of us. As we've learned, the proper way to interpret scripture is to prayerfully compare "spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13).

DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURE REVIEW:

Ephesians 3:17-19 “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Philippians 4:9 “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Colossians 2:9-10 “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”

1 Thessalonians 4:1 “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”

1 Timothy 1:12 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;”

2 Timothy 1:12 “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Monday – December 18th, 2017

TODAY'S READING: HEBREWS 1-6

OVERVIEW:

Comparing Christ to the Angels; comparing Christ to Moses; comparing Christ as our high priest to the priests of the Old Testament; comparing our rest in Christ to the rest of the Promised Land.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of Hebrews begins a section of the New Testament that often causes people problems. A mistake that is very easy to make, and is very often made when believers read the Word of God is viewing everything they read through “Christian” glasses. Christian glasses aren’t a bad thing when you’re reading a Book that is addressed to the local church (or a leader of a local church), but they can pose some pretty serious doctrinal problems if you leave them on when reading other Books of the New or Old Testament.

Like the Gospels, because the Book of Hebrews is found in the New Testament, most people leave their “local church”/ “Christian” glasses on while reading this Book. That is an invitation to doctrinal disaster. One of the things that will clear up about 90% of the difficulties found in the Book of Hebrews is simply asking yourself, “To whom was the Book of HEBREWS written?” Go ahead, take a wild stab at who you think it was! Uh, was it a local church? No. Uh, was it a leader of a local church? No. How about Gentiles? Good guess, but, no. Could it have been Hebrews? Yes! You got it! Wow! You must be a seminary graduate to understand something that deep!

The Book of Hebrews was written to Hebrews. Imagine that! And do you remember what we talked about concerning the Jews when we entered into our reading of the New Testament? In terms of *“rightly dividing the word of truth,”* the Jews/Nation of Israel is the *“ancient landmark”* that must be kept in place lest you enter into *“the fields of the fatherless.”* Not placing the “Hebrews” in the Book of Hebrews will make your study of the Book a “fatherless field.”

The theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Christ and the new covenant, compared to the old covenant. The key word you find in this Book is BETTER. We have a BETTER testament (7:22); a BETTER covenant (8:6); BETTER promises (8:6); a BETTER sacrifice (9:23); BETTER blood (12:24); BETTER substance (10:34); BETTER hope (7:19); a BETTER country (11:16); a BETTER resurrection (11:35).

This also provides an easy breakdown of the book:

Chapters 1-2 Christ is better than the angels.

Chapter 3 Christ is better than Moses.

Chapter 4 Christ is better than Joshua.

Chapters 5-7 Christ is a better High Priest.

Chapters 8-13 Christ established a better covenant.

Historically, the Book of Hebrews was written to reveal the establishment of the new covenant by Jesus Christ. This Book is actually the written form of what the Apostle Paul did when entering cities for the first time to proclaim the gospel. Acts 17:2-3 reveals that Paul's standard operating procedure when entering into a city, was to first go to the synagogue, and reason from the scriptures how that Christ was the Messiah. In those synagogues, to whom would Paul have been speaking? Predominantly Hebrews, right?

Doctrinally (or prophetically), the Book of Hebrews is written for the benefit of Jews during the Tribulation Period. We know from Romans 11 that God is not finished dealing with the Nation of Israel.

As we've discussed previously, on God's timetable we are presently living in a parenthesis called the Church Age. After the rapture of the church, God will once again deal directly with the Nation of Israel.

If you were a Jew in the Tribulation, and you realized that you and your people had missed the Messiah when Christ came the first time, as you look through the table of contents for the New Testament, what Book do you think you would be inclined to read? How about the one addressed specifically to you? The Book of HEBREWS!

We can, however, still learn a tremendous amount about the new covenant and Christ's sacrifice for us even though the Book of Hebrews is not written directly to the church. It does clearly reveal how Christ is the reality of the pictures and types contained in the Old Testament. It also contains some of the clearest teaching on the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice, how that from God's perspective, it was *"one sacrifice for sins for ever"*.

There are three clear warning passages contained in the first six chapters of Hebrews. They are as follows:

□ 2:1-4

□ 3:7-4:13

□ 5:11-6:20

These warning passages are usually a place where many people lose their neck. Historically, these passages apply in two ways. First, to those Hebrews that had already placed their faith in Christ, these are an exhortation to hold fast to that faith. This would be similar to the teaching we see in Galatians where Paul actually calls believers “foolish” even though they had trusted Christ. Second, to those Hebrews who had not placed their faith in Christ alone, these warnings serve as a call to salvation. They need to realize Christ is the fulfillment of what they say is true (the Old Testament), and they need to embrace the new covenant Christ has established.

Doctrinally, these warning passages serve as an exhortation to Hebrews during the Tribulation to remain true to Christ and endure until the end. This corresponds to Christ’s teaching in Matthew 24:13 that those who endure until the end shall be saved. As we saw in Matthew 24, the context of that passage is not the Church Age, but rather, the time immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ, the Tribulation.

Tuesday – December 19th, 2017

TODAY'S READING: HEBREWS 7-10

OVERVIEW:

Christ's priesthood superior to the Levitical priesthood; the old covenant was a shadow of the real; the old covenant sacrifices were temporary; Christ's sacrifice is permanent.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The chapters in today's reading provide one of the most complete explanations about the superiority of the Christ and the new covenant when compared with the old covenant. God begins by identifying Christ as a Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Notice, Christ is not a priest after the Levitical priesthood started with Aaron. The story of Melchisedec mentioned in chapter 7 is from Genesis 14:17- 20. The Levitical priesthood was comprised of men who were sinners. These men first had to offer sacrifices for themselves, and then for the people. These men had to offer sacrifices daily. However, Christ was not from this priesthood! He is a High Priest after Melchisedec. Christ was not a sinner. Christ does not have to offer sacrifices daily. Christ is a High Priest forever because He lives forever and makes intercession for us. Perfection could never come from the Levitical priesthood; it could only come from a different priesthood and different priest. Our perfection comes from our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God also reveals something very interesting in chapter 8. The sanctuary and tabernacle of the old covenant were merely a shadow of the real sanctuary and tabernacle inhabited by God. Think about the concept of a shadow. It can give an outline. It can help someone understand what something is – a person, a tree, a car, etc. However, it is not the real thing. Can you imagine someone wanting to have a conversation with your shadow? Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? That's God's point. He is the real thing. His sanctuary and tabernacle are the reality, not the shadow. His High Priest (Christ), is the perfect High Priest. Yet, many at that time still chose to hold on to a shadow instead of embracing the reality. Many do the same thing today. Religion is merely a shadow. There is nothing real in religion. It may make people feel better to go to church, to give their money, to sing nice songs, to be the best person they can be, but none of these things can change the reality of their sin. People still embrace the shadow instead of embracing the reality, Jesus Christ.

The old covenant revealed in itself that it was not sufficient. The holy of holies in

the old covenant could only be entered into one time per year on the Day of Atonement. This revealed that the way into the holiest of all (God's tabernacle – not the earthly one) was not yet revealed. It was simply a figure, a shadow, imposed by the law until the “time of reformation”. Notice, none of this could perfect the conscience of even the high priest offering the gift, let alone the rest of the people. But then the “time of reformation” did come, and we're not talking about Martin Luther! The real High Priest showed up. An everlasting High Priest. The High Priest of the true tabernacle. The blood offered by this High Priest was not the blood of bulls and goats, but was His own blood – the blood of God! This sacrifice can purge our conscience. This blood established a new covenant.

And how much greater this new covenant! The blood of bulls and goats (or anything else!) never could, never can, and never will be able to take away sin. But the blood and sacrifice of the new covenant is different because it was offered by a different High Priest. This Priest, this man, the Lord Jesus Christ offered ONE sacrifice for sins forever! There is no other sacrifice needed nor desired by God. You and I can't offer any sacrifice for sins. Sometimes we think we can. We think we can “sacrifice for sins” by feeling really, really bad about our sin (almost trying to do penance), or, when we sin, we think we can “sacrifice” for it by giving more, reading more, praying more, or witnessing more. But, do you realize how much all of these “sacrifices” actually accomplish concerning our sin? NOTHING! We can't add anything or take anything away from Christ's one sacrifice! We must trust His sacrifice, not our own. That is precisely why the false gospel that is preached by Roman Catholicism cannot save. It is a message that says Christ is still being sacrificed for sin (the mass). It is a message that says that although you're forgiven, you must still pay for your sin (purgatory). If someone wants to pay for their sin, they certainly have the option to do so. But God makes it clear what the payment is – DEATH! (Romans 6:23) That's why Christ said those that trust in Him shall never see death. It's not a physical death, but a spiritual death that has eternal consequences. May we simply trust the once offered sacrifice of our perfect High Priest, and rest completely in Him. May we proclaim the message of the new covenant so that others may hear.

TODAY'S READING: HEBREWS 11-13

OVERVIEW:

The examples of living by faith; the necessity of chastisement; the exhortation to endure; remembering others.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Hebrews 11 is one of the most popular chapters in the Bible. It is often referred to as “The Hall of Faith”. It lays out for us clear examples of what it means to live by faith. We know God wants us to live and walk by faith, but what that actually means can seem somewhat sketchy or nebulous. That’s why God presents in Hebrews 11, a panorama of men and women who walked by faith: so we can see what living and walking by faith actually looks like.

It’s also interesting to keep in mind what God reveals about the people mentioned in this chapter. Many times we read a chapter like Hebrews 11 and think that we could never live like that, because those people were “men and women of God!” How easily we forget that they were men and women just like us! Think about it. Noah got drunk after the flood. Abraham had a problem lying about his wife because he was more concerned about himself than he was her. Sarah thought she needed to help God out with His promise to Abraham. Jacob deceived and lied to his father in order to get his father’s blessing. Moses was willing to kill a man in his “service” to God. Rahab was a harlot. Samson wasted most of his life and ability pleasing himself. David committed adultery and murder. Were these people really “great men and women of God” or were they just men and women like us, who simply chose to exercise faith in God and His Word?

Obviously, there is a tremendous amount of personal application we can make from this chapter, but we can only touch on a couple of points:

1. Biblical faith results in action.

Notice that each example is an action that had its root in faith. When I am walking “by faith,” I’ll just bet you, I’ll be walking “in the Spirit.” The result of that walk will be evidenced in my life. Not because I manufacture something, but because biblical faith results in action.

2. Biblical faith changes our values.

As Laodiceans we want to have the best of both worlds. We want to walk with

God, but we also want to enjoy the pleasures of this life. Biblical faith enables us to see the emptiness and vanity of this world. Biblical faith embraces “another country, a better country”. Biblical faith looks for a city whose builder and maker is God. What are you looking for?

3. Biblical faith is what pleases God.

It sounds so simple. Why then do we try to please God with all of our human efforts? Do you think God is pleased by what you do? Do you think He is pleased because you go to church, give your money, sing praises, read the Bible, pray before meals, etc.? All of those things are great, but none of them are the real issue. The real issue is, are you living by faith, or trying to please God by your actions (i.e. your flesh). Remember, biblical faith will result in actions, but those same actions carried out in the flesh as an attempt to please God are worthless.

The only way you and I will live a life of faith is to follow the admonition given in chapter 12 and verse 2: we must LOOK UNTO JESUS! Our sights must be set on Him! He must be the goal we strive to attain. When He is not, if you are God’s child, God will seek to work in your life (i.e. chastisement) so that He is the priority. Notice, that not only are we to look unto Jesus, but we are to look diligently (12:15)! There are many ways we get our focus and eyes off of the Lord and onto this world. For some it is the immorality so prevalent in our culture. For others it is bitterness because of what someone did or what someone said, or because of their circumstances of life. For others it might simply be watching out for themselves. Whatever it is, even something not necessarily wrong, we must be willing to set it aside.

Get your eyes of yourself, off of others, and off of this world, and onto the Lord Jesus Christ, and please Him in your walk by faith!

Thursday – December 21th, 2017

TODAY'S READING: JAMES 1-5

OVERVIEW:

Patience in tribulation; encouraging impartiality; the power of the tongue; true humility; the failure of money; the power of prayer.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The same question we asked at the beginning of Hebrews is applicable as we get started today in the Book of James: To whom is this Book written? Most people come to the Book of James and read it without considering that fundamental question. We usually read James (as we do Hebrews) just like we read the letters written to local churches or leaders of local churches (Romans-Philemon). However, the Book of James is not written to a local church or a leader of a local church. Notice that in 1:1 it is written to *“the twelve tribes scattered abroad”* – Jews!

The key principle God is communicating in the Book of James is that genuine, biblical faith results in a changed life. Historically, this Book was written to Jews that had made a profession of faith in Christ, to teach them their faith should and will change their life. In a doctrinal, or prophetic sense, this Book is written to Jews living during the tribulation to teach them how to live out their faith in difficult circumstances. In a devotional sense, this Book is a very practical manual to help us understand how our faith should be lived out.

The Book can be broken down as follows:

Chapter 1 – Real faith should endure temptation.

Chapter 2 – Real faith should show no partiality.

Chapter 3 – Real faith should change our speech.

Chapter 4 – Real faith should transform our relationships.

Chapter 5 – Real faith should anticipate His return.

As mentioned above, there are many practical applications we can make to our lives from the Book of James. Here are a few to help you get started as you read this Book:

1. **Be a doer of the Word.(1:22-25)**

What a slap in the face these verses provide to our Laodicean generation. As Laodiceans, we often feel that we are sitting in a good place spiritually

because we “know” quite a bit about the Bible. God clearly reveals that it is not what you know, but what you do with what you know that is important! We need to judge ourselves the way God does – not based on our knowledge, but based on our walk.

2. See how God sees.(2:1-13)

What kind of people do you give preferential treatment? We may not banish the poor to the back rows while escorting the rich to the front as James talks about in this passage, but do you view the poor and/or other people groups the same way you esteem the rich and successful? Are you willing to talk to the visitors at church that you view as “sharp,” but don’t have time or interest for those that don’t look like they would be “your kind”? God help us. We must seek to reach out to those whom Christ is touching regardless of their socio-economic status, race, or background.

3. Watch your mouth.(3:1-18)

The questions James suggests in this passage deserve an answer! How is it that the same mouth can speak both blessing and cursing? How can we pray and sing such awesome words to God, but be so rude and cutting in talking to people and about people? James is right, *“My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”*

4. Humble yourself before God.(4:1-10)

We live in a culture that teaches us to watch out for ourselves. Our natural thought process is to lift up ourselves in the sight of others. God’s command is the complete opposite. We are to humble ourselves before Him, and then His grace will work in us to lift us up. I love Andrew Murray’s comment concerning humility: “Humility is not thinking meanly about yourself. It is not thinking of yourself at all.”

5. God answers prayer.(5:14-18)

None of us would dare say that God doesn’t answer prayer, but do our actions reveal that we really believe that He does? Do we really believe God hears us and cares about the needs we bring before Him? Do we really believe that the *“effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”*?

May we apply the incredibly practical truths of this Book, allowing God’s grace and power to be displayed in and through us.

Friday – December 22th, 2017

TODAY'S READING: I PETER 1-5

OVERVIEW:

The call to be holy; Jesus Christ is our cornerstone; learning to submit; the relationship between a husband and wife; suffering for the right reasons; yielding everything to Christ.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As the Book of I Peter opens, Peter is pointing these believers who were enduring intense suffering toward the *“lively hope”* that was theirs because of *“the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1:3). He reminds them that though all of their possessions may be taken from them in this life (as many of them had experienced in their suffering), God has promised them *“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,”* and that it has been *“reserved in heaven”* for them. Peter recognized that that promise would make life in the future glorious and filled with rejoicing, but that for this present time, the readers of his letter were *“in heaviness through manifold temptations”* or trials.

Verse 7 of chapter 1 is a BLOCKBUSTER. It lets us know several key things about the trials, difficulties, and sufferings we endure in this life. First, it lets us know that these difficulties are not some random acts of fate, but rather the God-ordained *“trying of our faith.”* In other words, God has our faith in the witness stand, and wants to see what it is made of. Because of Peter's understanding of these trials, he uses a term to refer to them that seldom comes to mind when the bottom has seemingly dropped out of our lives. He refers to these difficulties (trials) as *“precious.”* His point is, they aren't precious because of what they are, but because of what they actually accomplish. God has either appointed or allowed these circumstances to come into our lives to purify us as we move toward our ultimate accounting before the Lord Jesus Christ at His appearing.

Just as gold is the most *“precious”* commodity on earth from man's vantage point, our faith is the most *“precious”* commodity on earth from God's perspective. And just as gold is purified as it is *“tried in the fire,”* so also are we (or is our faith)!

Peter gives his readers all of the hope and confidence we need as we face the trials of life, reminding us that God's intention through them is that we *“might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”!* Peter's point is, knowing that *“praise and honour and glory”* will be the result in *“THAT”*

day, should have a major impact on our attitude TOday!

The Book of I Peter is all about being set apart for God's use. Another way to say that is to say that this Book is about us being "holy." Usually when we think of "holiness," or being "holy," we start to make a list in our minds of the things we can and cannot do. While holiness certainly dictates what we do and do not do, it is certainly not the main thought behind God's command in 1:16, "*Be ye holy: for I am holy.*" Being holy is not a matter of rules and regulations. It is about God working in us to make us like Himself, changing us from the inside out – not the outside in.

As Peter continues his epistle, he lets us know that not only should our holiness manifest itself in our reaction to trials, but in our submission to the authorities God has placed in our lives. Even when those authorities are wrong we are to have an attitude of submission, not looking to get our own way. In light of Peter's instruction concerning Christian submission, it is difficult to reconcile that in the 21st century we have "Christian" organizations and lawyers fighting for Christians' rights! Obviously, that doesn't mean Christians can't use the laws of the land to try to bring about change, but demanding our "rights" is a concept foreign to the Bible. Jesus left us an example of submitting to those in authority even when they were wrong. In fact, God even specifically says that it is "*thankworthy*" if we suffer wrongfully for being a Christian. When we do, we remind Him of His Son! That's why He becomes so filled with thanks. (Imagine that, God thanking us for something!) Correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm afraid that fighting for our "rights" has something to do with our not wanting to suffer.

Peter reveals that holiness also expresses itself in having a right relationship with our spouse. A right relationship is the result of husbands honoring their wives, and wives submitting to their husbands (3:1-7). Notice also, that carrying out your biblical responsibility to your spouse is not dependent on whether or not they fulfill theirs! Husbands are to honor their wives even if the wife isn't what God wants her to be. Likewise, wives are to submit to their husbands, despite his shortcomings, and even his disobedience (3:1).

Have you ever noticed that the things that are valuable to God just happen to be the very things that this world is against? Wives, check out the value God places on a "*meek and quiet spirit*" (3:4). The world despises such a concept! Husbands, honoring your wife in this culture may not make you a "macho man" in the eyes of your buddies, but it will keep you on praying ground with God (3:7). That's how much value He places on your responsibility to your wife. If you refuse to honor her, He will refuse to hear you when you pray!

Next, Peter shows us that holiness also expresses itself in having love, compassion, and one mind with other believers (3:8-9). True holiness doesn't render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but rather blessing. I think it is worth noting, that not rendering evil for evil and railing for railing is in the context of having "*love as brethren*" (3:8-9). That should let us know that there will be times when some other believer is going to wrong us. They might do something to us or say something about us; it might be premeditated, or it might not. What is your response going to be? Is it going to be to "bless" them, or to "get even" with them? Will we offer forgiveness, or will we hold a grudge? Being holy (being set apart for God's use) does not express itself in seeking vengeance upon others – whether by doing them evil, or wishing it upon them.

As you read through I Peter you will notice a recurring theme: loving the brethren, and enduring suffering for Christ. It just so happens that those two things seem to be the very things we have the hardest time doing! Pride in us keeps us unwilling to cover the sins of others when they wrong us (4:8), and makes us think that we deserve better in the midst of suffering. Perhaps that is why God commands us in chapter 5 to humble ourselves under His mighty hand. But how do we do that? Pay careful attention to 5:5-7. God doesn't end the sentence in verse 6, but rather, completes the thought of verse 6 in verse 7. The way we humble ourselves before God is by casting all of our care upon Him! Most of the time this verse is applied in times of sorrow, and rightfully so, because it does certainly teach us that God cares for us. However, God wants this verse to become practical for us, not just with the cares that make us sorrowful – but with everything we find ourselves "caring" about. Who of us doesn't wrestle with the "*cares of this world*" (our finances, our careers, our families, our future)? Notice that 5:7 says that God wants us to cast ALL of our cares upon Him. God wants us to genuinely surrender every aspect of our lives to Him. That's what genuine humility is all about! And that's when God pours out His grace (the desire and power to obey God) upon us (James 4:6).

Saturday – December 23rd, 2017

TODAY'S READING: II PETER 1-3

OVERVIEW:

Growing in our faith; the superiority of God's Word to experience; false prophets and teachers; the Second Coming of Christ.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Peter writes his second epistle to remind these believers of truths they already knew, but needed to always have in remembrance. Do you ever need to be reminded of what you already know? I know I sure do! There is a major difference between knowing something in our minds, and seeing it become operative in our lives. That's what Peter is driving at.

This Book starts out by revealing the growth process of a believer in Jesus Christ. Just like a baby is born and immediately begins a natural growth process, a believer in Jesus Christ is born again and should likewise immediately begin a process of growth. The result of our growth in Jesus Christ is a life that bears fruit. Peter lets us know, however, that the result of not growing is that we lose our ability to see spiritually, and may even get to the point of forgetting that we were saved! Eternal security is a fact. Once someone is born into God's family they are His child forever. The assurance of our salvation, however, comes only from our growth in Christ. If someone is doubting their salvation, it is not our job to tell them whether or not they are saved. That's the Spirit's job. Our responsibility is to point them to the Word of God, and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to them their true condition.

II Peter 1:16-21 is a key passage to understanding the importance of God's Word and its reliability. The event Peter is talking about is found in Matthew 17:1-8. Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to a mountain and revealed His true glory to them (the glory that will be His at His Second Coming). At that time, God the Father spoke so that the disciples heard Him say, *"This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased"*. Can you imagine that experience? Go check out Matthew 17:1-8. Peter, James, and John were totally blown away! What could be more sure than seeing Christ in His glory, and hearing the audible voice of God? Only one thing – the Bible! That's exactly what God is saying in verse 19! We have a *"more sure word of prophecy"* (1:19). More sure than what? More sure than the experience Peter witnessed! In other words, more sure than even the audible voice of God! That is why we must let the Bible judge every experience.

The Bible is what is true. The Bible is what does not change. Do not judge the Bible by your experience, but rather, judge your experience by the Bible. Just as there are false teachers today, there were already many false teachers in Peter's day. God does not mince words in His condemnation of false teachers. Many people today get upset if you mention false teachers by name. However, we're not talking about people who are simply misguided themselves, but people who are actively propagating a message that condemns others to hell! Notice that these are also the people to which Peter is referring in 2:19-22. Some have mistakenly believed that 2:20-21 teaches that a person can lose their salvation. However, the context makes completely clear that this is in reference to teachers who have never been saved in the first place.

This Book ends with a reminder of the most important date on God's calendar – the day of the Lord! Even in Peter's day, there were already people mocking the Second Coming of Christ, just as there are today. You gotta love Peter's line in verse 5, *"For this they willingly are ignorant"*. It is interesting that the world considers Bible-believers to be ignorant, when the Bible says that they are actually the ignorant ones, and willingly at that! Why does God say that? Because the evidence for the reliability of God's Word is open for all to see. God is saying that the problem isn't that they CAN'T see, it's that they don't WANT to see!

Keep in mind why Peter is writing this epistle. It is to put his readers in remembrance of what they already know. Though we know the truth of 3:11, may we always keep it in our remembrance: *"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."*

It is indeed a strange phenomenon that we who know that we should invest our lives in eternal things, spend most of our time pursuing and accumulating things that will simply be dissolved by the presence of our Lord. May that reality cause us to invest our lives in the only two things that will last forever: the Word of God and the souls of men!