



2 Peter 1:16-21 God Sent A Message

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When you open up your Bible, you're holding a unique thing in your hands. Because when you look at a letter like 2 Peter, one of 66 books in the Bible, you're actually looking at two things.

On the one hand, it's a letter, written by a man named Peter who put down some thoughts that he wanted to get across to some people he knew. In that sense, it's not much different from a letter you or I would write. But at the same time, it's also God's Word – it's Scripture. Something else was going on while Peter was writing – something he may or may not have known at the time – he wasn't just writing down what he wanted to say, he was writing down what God wanted recorded. God was using him to communicate some truths that God wanted preserved.

If you've ever wondered how we got the Bible, we're going to get into some of those details this morning. There's a whole lot more we could say, and many more answers I could give, you can take a semester long course on some of these issues in Seminary – but we'll at least scratch the surface and see a little bit of how Scripture came about, and equally important, how people have reacted to it.

This morning we'll pick things up here in verse 16. Peter has been reminding his readers of all that they have in Christ, of how they should respond to what Jesus has done for them, and he's been saying that he doesn't mind reminding them of these basic details because he knows he's about to die and he wants to make sure they have a reminder of the essentials of the faith long after he is gone.

And now, as we read vs 16, he explains why he is so sure of the things he has been telling people:

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.

This isn't just a story someone made up. Peter says, we really heard and saw these things with our own two eyes and ears.

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." **18** And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Peter is talking about the Transfiguration – a time, shortly before Jesus' death, when Jesus took Peter, James and John up on a mountain and they got to see a bit of the curtain pulled

back, they got to see some of Jesus' true eternal glory shining through and they heard, **actually, audibly heard**, the voice of God saying, "This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" (Matt 17:5)

The disciples saw some pretty incredible things during the three years they lived and traveled with Jesus, and on top of all of that, they actually heard the voice of God confirming what they pretty much already knew – that Jesus was His Son, and should be believed – that's a kind of stamp of authenticity. If you get God speaking out loud, telling people to believe you, well, that's an endorsement. But Peter says one more thing – all of this actually lines up with what the prophets had been saying would happen all along.

[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; [20](#) knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, [21](#) for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

Peter says, "what we experienced lined up with Scripture, and you know Scripture can be trusted, because we all know Scripture came from God – He moved men by His Holy Spirit to say or record the things He wanted communicated."

Sometimes they knew they were doing it – the Old Testament is full of prophets who wrote things and started off their writing with "The Word of the Lord came to me" or "Thus saith the Lord."

Others were just led to write a letter to a friend or a group, and did not know at the outset that their words were destined to become Scripture. Luke, says he wrote his gospel, or account of Jesus' life, because even though other people were writing stuff down, "it seemed good to also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."

It just seemed like a good idea at the time – God didn't speak to him in a booming voice and tell him to do it, he was led in what we might call the most natural way, the most logical way, to do something of supernatural importance.

Both categories of people – those who knew they were speaking for God, and those who were just doing what seemed natural, were, to use Peter's own term, "eyewitnesses." The authors of Scripture recorded what they had seen and heard.

If you go to court today, we still call and use eyewitnesses. We put people under oath and make them swear to tell us "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

In a day and age of increasing technological sophistication, the backbone of most of our learning is still the testimony of others. They tell us what they know and we believe it.

When you go to the doctor, they ask you to rate your own pain on a scale of 1-10. They don't take your blood pressure and your temperature, your height and weight, and then hook you up to a machine and say, well, it looks like you're suffering from 6.2 today... No, they ask you how you feel and what happened to make you feel this way, and they accept your testimony.

Well, the Bible was written by eyewitnesses – people who really experienced the great things that God was doing, and they were so moved by what they experienced that they wanted to tell others so they wrote it all down.

And most of them did not just have some private religious experiences. It's not just a single individual making radical claims about what happened to them, the men and women whose words are recorded in Scripture reported about things that were well known at the time.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15: [3](#) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4](#) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, [5](#) and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. [6](#) After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. [7](#) After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. [8](#) Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Paul says, if you want to check this out, go ask people – I'm the one telling you, but I'm not the only one who saw it all.

When the High Priest was questioning Jesus before His crucifixion, Jesus also made the claim that eyewitnesses could verify everything He had said and done:

John 18:[19](#) The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. [20](#) Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. [21](#) Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."

So, these things happened, and people who were there wrote about them so that people who weren't there – like you and me, could know what happened. Again, just like with a court case – we accept the testimony of eyewitnesses to help us get to the bottom of the case.

Turn with me to Exodus Chapter 20, and let's take a look at one more example of how an eyewitness recorded what many other people knew had happened. Where we pick things up, Moses has already been used to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. The people have already witnessed God perform all the miracles of the plagues, they've seen Him part the Red Sea so they could walk through on dry land, and now, as they are gathered together at Mount Sinai He speaks to the whole nation at once, giving them the Ten Commandments:

1 And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 “I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything that is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. 11 For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

13 “You shall not murder.

14 “You shall not commit adultery.

15 “You shall not steal.

16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor’s.”

18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

20 And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” 21 So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God *was*.

The people didn’t want to hear from God directly, they wanted to have a middleman, because they couldn’t handle being exposed to the sheer holiness and majesty of God. So God spoke to Moses and Moses spoke to the people. Moses served as a prophet – someone who received a message from God and made it known to the people.

From Moses all the way to John the Baptist – Jesus’ cousin, God continued using prophets to receive His instruction and communicate His message to the people, *even when the people weren’t interested in hearing it and the prophets themselves grew weary of delivering it*.

Listen to what the prophet Jeremiah had to say in Jeremiah Chapter 20:

[7](#) O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded;
You are stronger than I, and have prevailed.
I am in derision daily;
Everyone mocks me.

Jeremiah was speaking on behalf of God, publicly preaching a message that wasn't well received. And so, he thought, "Fine, I'll quit.

[9](#) Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him,
Nor speak anymore in His name."
But *His word* was in my heart like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
I was weary of holding *it* back,
And I could not.

Some of you have a little bit of an idea about what that is like – you've had those experiences where God is wanting to use you, perhaps to share your faith like Bob spoke about last week, or to do something, or say something, and you keep trying to talk yourself out of it, but you just can't get any peace until you do it! You're experiencing something of that prophetic compulsion.

Now, to me, that is so cool of God. He wants something done and He wants you to do it, and He's not going to let up until you comply, well, either that or you intentionally harden your heart and walk away. But if you're just held back by fear or worry, then I love it when He hounds us and hounds us to do what we know is right.

Unfortunately though, as you may have already experienced – just because you're trying to tell people what God has said doesn't mean you're always going to be embraced – you might just be opposed or rejected.

It happened to Moses – the people continually ignored the message He brought from God then turned around and whined about why God wasn't doing more for them.

It happened to Jeremiah – false prophets said he was lying and kept contradicting the things he said. Even though he was an old man he was thrown into a dungeon because people got tired of hearing what he had to say.

It happened to Peter – remember what he said about why he is writing this?

[13](#) Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*,
[14](#) knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.
[15](#) Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

Peter knows he is going to die shortly, and Church History tells us he was crucified upside down, dying a martyr's death for the sake of the message he believed and spread about what God had done through Jesus.

And, of course, even Jesus Himself was rejected. He who came to be Emmanuel "God with us," was arrested, falsely charged, and murdered for it all.

You see, the problem has never really been with getting God to speak to man, the problem is usually with getting men to listen to God and to receive what He has to say without coming up with excuses or flatly rejecting God's message.

And yet, for all our resistance, He keeps on attempting to communicate with us – He has been active throughout history bringing His plan of salvation together, and now that it is complete with the life, death, burial and resurrection of His Son, He continues to spread the good news across the world and throughout our lives.

And one of the most trustworthy, dependable, sources of information about it all is the Bible – His written record. As Peter wrote in verse [21](#) "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit."

I hope you marvel at this – God wants to speak to you, He wants to be heard by you, He wants to be understood by you. He's not hiding from you, He's not playing hard to get, He's not trying to be mysterious – He's saying, "Here I am, come to me."

So how should you respond to that? You should respond exactly as Peter has been saying - by seeking to grow in your "knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." And the best place to turn for that knowledge is to these Scriptures which God inspired men to write.

So get yourself a Bible and read it. Or listen to it. Get a Bible app. Do something - just get God's Word into your mind and let God use it.

Start by reading the Gospel of John, which we're going to go through next. Or try the book of Acts – it's a historical account of what happened immediately after Jesus left earth. Or read a really short book like Ephesians or 1 John. But read something and don't just fill your mind with more and more data and details about this earth – everything here will soon fade away. Remember, there's "Only one life, will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

Try writing down a verse or a few verses on a notecard that you can carry around or put in a prominent spot where you will see it regularly. Something to help you start memorizing God's message, or at least thinking about it over and over again so that it becomes a part of the way you look at yourself and the world.

And get yourself a study Bible – they're full of notes that will help you understand some of things that you are reading. We have a few over on the book table, or you can come and see me or email me and I'll be happy to provide some recommendations for you.

And then, as you grow in your knowledge of truth, as Peter says, you should seek to grow in your application of the truths found here in the Scriptures. So,

When you need forgiveness for your failures and your selfishness, turn to God and ask.

When you need comfort and healing, turn to God and ask.

When you need instruction in what to do, turn to God and ask.

And when you need strength or wisdom in doing what you know you should do, turn to God and ask.