

Title: Fable, Fairytale, or Fact? (Part 4)

Passage: 2 Peter 1:20-21

Theme: It is certain that Christ will return; until then give yourselves to the prophetic Word of God

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{{Read Passage}}

This AM we are on sched. to finish 1st chapt. of 2 Peter . . .

3 chapt. which means that we're 1/3 of the way thru t/book.

More precise, there are 61 vv. After this AM we will have finished 21 of those 61 vv. / 34.4%

Last week we spent t/hour in v. 19 – a verse that we called a hinge (between 16-18 / 20-21).

Not going to review what we went through last time. If you weren't here I'd strongly encourage you to get a copy of that message or check w/Greg to see when it's going to air.

Even as we talk about finishing ch 1 we look forward to ch. 2. This partic. passage lays t/groundwork for Peter's description & denunciation of false teachers in t/2nd chapt.

Peter is doing what Jude did - namely defending t/faith once for all delivered to t/saints. IOW - there's a body of truth that is THE FAITH & as such it cannot be trifled with.

God has spoken. His Word, as we'll see later, is t/foundation for all truth. We can't take that which is absolute and unchangeable & make it relative.

To do that is to profane t/voice of God.

And that's what false teachers & heretics and cultists do.

From Rob Bell to Harold Camping, from Benny Hinn to Joel Osteen. From t/Watchtower Bible and Tract Society to t/Universalist-Unitarians – they are all guilty of muting & perverting t/living Word of God.

That much hasn't changed in 2k years. Those to whom Peter wrote, mostly Gentile Xns living w/i t/Provinces of Asia Minor, were being seduced by men who were expert at twisting t/Scripture to fit their corrupt theology.

They accused Peter & t/Apostles of fabricating their Christology, particularly as it related to X's second coming.

In verses 16-18 - Peter establishes ==>

I. An Eyewitness Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith

For we did not follow ingenious myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Peter goes on in vv. 17-18 to tell of his experience w/James & John w/Jesus on t/Mt. of Transfig.

The false teachers claimed that t/OT prophets were 2nd rate.

Peter counters by saying that t/voice of t/prophets is recorded in t/OT is confirmed as God's Word, ==>

II. An Enduring Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (19-21)

A. The Trustworthiness of Scripture (19)

And we have the prophetic Word made more sure to which you do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

"Those things that t/OT prophets foretold was confirmed by what we saw. God's Word is sure. As you live your life in a dark, fallen world stained by sin, it's the lamp that shines in darkness; it's the light unto your path. Follow it; Heed it; Live it; Love it until t/end of t/age when you are rewarded w/the fulness of X Himself."

Reason t/Prophetic Word is trustworthy & sure is because of it's origin.

Knowing this first of all,

B. The Divine Origin of Scripture (20-21)

Negative in v. 20 followed by a positive in v. 21.

1. Negatively:

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

a. What does that mean?

Key word Adj. ἑδῆος "one's own."

What does it mean that ==>

. . . no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

b. Boil it down to 2 basic options:

(1) The "one's own" refers to the prophet

The NIV interprets it this way when they translate v. 20 ==>

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

That is an interpretation.

What makes this so difficult is that t/Greek is rather awkward.

It quite literally reads ==>

Knowing this first, that all prophetic scripture did not come about by one's own interpretation.

So any translation that reads differently is trying to smooth out in English what was originally written in Greek.

The 1st view interprets this to mean that t/prophet didn't utter his prophecy by way of his own explanation. The message didn't originate with him.

(2) The "one's own" refers not to the prophet but to the reader (or the individual interpreter)

If you understand the verse this way, it's saying that Scripture is not to be subject to your own interpretation.

(a) 2 sub-categories to this view (one has merit the other does not)

We're going to call them The Magisterium View; The Elect Church View.

i. The Magisterium View is represented by any individual or group that places itself over Scripture as its interpreter

IOW - anyone / anything that says, "*You cannot interpret t/Bible for yourself; we alone have t/authority to do that.*"

While this view could be represented by Mormons or JW, it's best represented by Roman Catholicism.

John O'Brien, in his best-selling book "The Faith of Millions" represents Rome when he writes ==>

"The simple fact is that the Bible is not a clear and intelligible guide to all. There are many passages in the Bible which are difficult and obscure, not only to the ordinary person, but to the highly trained scholar as well. St. Peter himself tells us that in the epistles of St. Paul there are "certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." Consequently, he tells us elsewhere "that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation." [John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions*, rev. ed. (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974), 135-36]

He goes on to say ==>

"The Bible, like all dead letters, requires a living interpreter." [137]

"As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence." [Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 82]

16th c. Council of Trent affirmed that only the Roman Catholic Church may judge the true meaning and interpretation of the sacred scriptures.

Contemporary RC apologists regularly cite this verse as evidence that individuals are not to privately interpret the Bible.

Of course, when they do that what are they doing? Interpreting the Bible.

What does it mean that ==>

. . . no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

b. Two basic options:

(1) The "one's own" refers to the prophet

(2) The "one's own" refers to the reader

But remember, we said that there were ==>

(a) 2 sub-categories to this view (one has merit the other does not)

We've just looked at ==>

i. The Magisterium View

In case you didn't catch it, this is the view that doesn't have merit (for obvious reasons, some of which we will explore in a bit).

The 2nd option that takes "one's own" as referring to t/readers we'll call:

ii. The Elect Church View (Spiritual View)

One commentator represents this view ==>

"Peter is saying that no man has the right to interpret Scripture . . . privately. How then must it be interpreted? . . . How did the prophets receive their message? They received it from the Spirit. . . . The obvious conclusion is that it is only through the help of that same Spirit that the prophetic message can be understood. As Paul had already said spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14,15). . . .

So, then, Scripture is not to be interpreted by private cleverness or private prejudice; it is to be interpreted by the help of the Holy Spirit by whom it was first given." [Barclay, 313]

Martin Luther claimed that we cannot interpret Scripture by mere reason, but only by the Spirit. "By this be directed, and do not think to explain the Scripture by your own reason and wisdom. Peter has forbidden you to explain it by your own reason. The Holy Spirit will explain it himself, or it shall remain unexplained. If now any one of the holy fathers :an prove that he draws his explanation from the Scriptures, which prove that it should be so explained, then it is right. Where this is not the case, I for one shall not believe him. Thus Peter lays hold on the boldest and best teachers; therefore, we should rest assured that none is to be believed who expounds the Scriptures by interpreting and explaining them with his own powers. For the true sense cannot be obtained by private interpretation."

There's something to be said for this, if it's understood within t/context of t/universal church. It's sola scriptura, not solo scriptura. The Bible is given to believers who make up t/church which is t/pillar and support of t/truth. That doesn't mean that genuine believers will agree on every point of interpretation, but it does mean that among true Xns, t/elect, there is agreement as it relates to t/cardinal doctrines of t/faith.

While this view has merit, I think t/context argues against it.

I'm going w/John Calvin on this one.

Calvin who writes ==>

"However, another sense seems to me more simple, that Peter says that Scripture came not from man, or through the suggestions of man. . . .

Peter especially bids us to believe the prophecies as the . . . oracles of God, because they have not emanated from men's own private suggestions." [2 Peter]

When Peter writes that ==>

. . . no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

(1) The "one's own" refers to the prophet

c. That fits the context

Peter isn't concerned with the "interpretation" of t/Bible but w/the surety and origin of it. That follows from v. 21.

If Peter was warning against t/individual reading & interpreting Scripture for himself, he would be contradicting what he just said in v. 19 ==>

. . . we have the prophetic Word made more sure to which you do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place . . .

Peter's not saying, *"Don't touch the lamp! You don't know how to use it. It's hot and you may be burned"*

No, he's saying, *"Use t/lamp! Use it the right way, but use it!"*

(1) I take it that these false teachers to whom Peter is turning next were in some way denying the prophetic voice of the OT

The Samaritans and t/Sadducees accepted only the Torah and rejected the authority of the Nevi'im.

The Ebionites, akin to the Judaizers, were critical of the OT prophets. While they arose after t/destruction of Jerus. in AD 70 they may be indicative of a general mindset that was less than favorable to t/OT.

Then you had t/Greeks & Romans who viewed prophecy itself as little more than frenzied ecstasy.

Peter is defending t/divine origin of t/OT Scriptures. They didn't come about by subjective ecstasy, t/prophets weren't speaking or writing that which came out of their own imaginations, they were uttering t/very Words of God.

(2) Word translated "interpretation" in v. 20 - ἐπιλυσις is only used here in the NT

One lexical source states that the word "almost comes to mean inspiration" [NLK]

Divine origin of Scripture, not t/private interpretation of it.

That was always t/central issue. Was t/prophet speaking forth God's Word or man's?

Jewish historian Philo wrote that ==>

"a [true] prophet says nothing of his own (ἰδίου) but everything which he says is foreign (to him) and prompted by someone else (i.e. God)."

[Vit. Mos. 1.281]

(3) Throughout the history of Israel there was no shortage of false prophets

DEU 18:20 **'But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'**

Turn to Jeremiah 23 . . . {vv. 16-17} Rob Bell? Joel Osteen?
Verse 15b parallel to t/USA?

Isaiah chapt. 30 talks about the people who say ==>

"You must not prophesy to us what is right, Speak to us pleasant words, Prophecy illusions. . . . Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

2TI 4:3-4 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but {wanting} to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

RCH Lenski writes (H. Camping?):

False prophets foretold that Jerusalem would never fall, that it would crush the Romans; that is what *they* wanted. They fixed symbolical, allegorical, figurative language to bear such an 'interpretation,' but Jerusalem was utterly destroyed. [298]

Knowing this first of all . . .

B. The Divine Origin of Scripture (20-21)

. . . that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

Same God whom t/apostles heard speak on t/Holy Mt. w/Jesus spoke through the prophets.

John Calvin adds: "Prophecy did not come from the will of man; it did come from the Spirit of God."

Calvin not only had exegetical grounds for his understanding of this verse, he also had historical precedent.

Oecumenius (6th century), made this observation on 2 Peter 1:20:

"This means that the prophets received their prophecies from God and transmitted what he wanted to say, not what they wanted. They were fully aware that the message had been given to them, and they made no attempt to put their own interpretation on it. If they could not bring themselves to accept what the Spirit had said to them, then they kept their mouths shut, as Jonah did, for example, when he refused to preach to Nineveh, and Balaam also did when he was commanded to say what had been communicated to him." [cited in D.T. King, 1.96-97]

Andreas (7th century), commenting on 2 Peter 1:21 said:

"Peter does not say that the prophets interpreted their own sayings. They were not speaking to themselves but serving the Holy Spirit. What is the interpretation of their words if not the works which Christ revealed when he came? So if anyone wants to understand the words of the prophets properly, let him obtain faith in Jesus Christ, through which he will recognize the divine message." [cited in D.T. King, 1.96]

"Theophilus of Antioch, who wrote about AD 170, three times alludes to these verses, 19-21. He speaks of '[God's] word shining like a light in a small house'. He writes, 'the men of God, carriers of the Spirit, have become prophets, and have been taught by God because God's own Spirit has been breathed into them.' And he writes, 'we are taught by the Holy Spirit who spoke through the holy prophets.' [ad Autol. ii. 13, ii. 9, ii. 33, cited in M. Green, footnote on page 97]

Not a warning against reading and understanding the Bible for yourself. Another interpretation of this passage is: No prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation, i.e. prophets do not make up their own prophecies, but receive them from God. [Dom Bernard Orchard, M.A., ed., A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (London: Thomas Nelson, 1953), p. 1183, first column]

Augustine, in speaking of the voice of God in Scripture declared: "God alone swears securely because He alone is infallible." [cited in David T. King,

Sacred Scripture, vol. 1, 130]

II. An Enduring Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (19-21)

A. The Trustworthiness of Scripture (19)

And we have the prophetic Word made more sure to which you do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

B. The Divine Origin of Scripture (20-21)

1. Negatively:

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation.

2. Positively:

For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man . . .

a. For is functioning as an explanatory clause

Origin, not interpretation.

. . . .but men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.

Verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture . . .

2 Timothy 3:16 **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;**

"God so superintended the human authors of Scripture that without negating their personality, or literary style, they recorded His very words

without error, without excess, without omission, in the words of the original mss."

B.B. Warfield "concurus". God is the efficient cause; men are the instrumental cause.

. . . .but men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.

φέρω = to bear, carry — Present Passive Participle.

Word used of a ship being carried or borne along by the wind as it filled the sails (Acts 27:15,17). (From which we get the word "ferry").

Same word used in v. 17 (divine origin).

Note that God uses each as an individual. Lesson for us.

"You see, then, how powerful a reason for taking heed to the prophetic word is folded up in the 20th and 21st verses. What God reveals must be worth attending to. It may be expected to require, and it must deserve at once the most reverent attention, and the most implicit faith. It is not human conjecture—or statement—or reasoning; it is Divine revelation, and therefore unfathomably deep, infallibly true, and supremely authoritative as the rule of faith and duty. It cannot be disregarded without consummate folly and deep guilt. To disregard it is the very reverse of right, wise, or safe. . . . Reverent study of the inspired word is at once the symptom of a healthy, and the means of producing a vigorous Christianity. . . . A well understood Bible is the only basis of a sound theology, an enlightened piety, practical godliness, solid comfort, and extensive usefulness." [John Brown, 218-19]

C. Something else I wanted to cover (alluded to it last week)

But I wasn't sure where to do so.

I feel like the guy who didn't know much about punctuation. So he wrote a letter without any and ended it w/a bunch of periods, commas, semi-colons and the like along with a note (put these where you want).

1. Doctrine of "Necessary Consequence" (inference) ==>

Helpful in understanding sola scriptura and the criticisms of that doctrine, particularly by Roman Catholics who claim, like Francis Beckwith, that there are essential doctrines of t/Xn faith that are not spelled out in t/Bible.

Understanding the doctrine of N.C. also helps in understanding the dangers of "solo scriptura". (reckless, subjective interpretation)

WCF - VI. The **whole** counsel of God, concerning **all things** necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either **expressly** set down in Scripture, or by **good and necessary consequence** may be deduced from Scripture: unto which **nothing** at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

The Bible is not merely what is expressly written, but all necessary inferences from it. All the valid implications are the WOG.

William Cunningham (19th c. Scottish theologian): "It has been the generally received doctrine of orthodox divines, and it is in entire accordance with reason and common sense, that we are bound to receive as true on God's authority, not only what is expressly set down in Scripture but also what by good and necessary consequence can be deduced from Scripture. And heretics, in every age of every class have

--even when they made a profession fo receiving what has been expressly set down in Scripture-- shown the greatest aversion to what are sometimes called scriptural consequences, that is inferences or deductions from Scriptural statements beyond what is expressly contained in the mere words of Scripture as they stand on the page of the sacred record."

Trinity ==> Necessary consequence.

Two natures of Christ ==> Necessary consequence.

John 6 ==> Necessary consequence as to perseverance.

Interestingly, Kenneth Goode, in his book, "Are Baptists Calvinists," rejects this doctrine.

John Gill affirms it, rightly so, I believe.

"nor is every doctrine of the Scripture expressed in so many words, as the doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, the eternal generation of the Son of God, his incarnation and satisfaction, etc. – but then the things signified by them are clear and plain. And there are terms and phrases answerable to them, or they are to be deduced from thence by just and necessary consequence."

We being w/Scripture as the Axiom. The Bible is the presupposition upon which we ground all of reality. Moves us away from fables, fairytales to facts and truth.

If that's true, then we sort of people ought we to be?

Discipline toward holiness begins then with the Scriptures – with a disciplined plan for regular intake of the Scriptures and a disciplined plan for applying them to our daily lives. [Jerry Bridges, The Pursuit of Holiness 1996, p. 97]