

2 Peter 1:19-21 – Light in this world's darkness: the Scriptures

19 And we also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, 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. 20 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.

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1. A dark world (v19)

We all need light. When it is dark, we sleep and wait for the day so that we can see our way around again. We need light not only in the natural world, but also in spiritual things. The world, spiritually, is a dark place. We are born in darkness, not knowing God and not knowing the way to God. It is impossible to find the way ourselves. Who was ever born knowing about Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection? Nobody. The world will continue to be dark until Jesus returns – that is the dawning of the day. There will be glorious light all around, and there will also be the full light of understanding risen in our hearts. But now, in the darkness, evil and error can easily spread. People cannot see the way themselves, so they are easily led away into false teachings and wrong deeds. That is why there are so many religions in the world: because men's hearts are darkened. Therefore, we need to be very careful and discerning. We need to pray for God to give us help by his Spirit, to know the way of truth and the way of error. We need him to give us a light – and he has. That is what Peter now tells us about.

2. A light that shines (v19-21)

There is a light! Peter has already told us of Jesus' coming into the world – which Peter had seen and heard. He has told us of the voice that spoke from heaven, to point us to Jesus. But, there was something else too – something certain. It is the “prophetic word”. What does he mean? He means the Scriptures, verse 20. He means all that was written in the Bible before Christ came. It was all given to point us forward to him. It is a light shining in the dark, as Psalm 119:105 says. Psalm 19 tells us about how the word of God shines in teaching us truth, as brightly as the sun shines in the sky. The Scriptures explain so much, so clearly. What is man's true problem? Sin. How did it enter the world? Our first parents disobeyed God's command. What has God been doing? He has a plan of salvation, that a Messiah should come out of his chosen nation to die for the sins of the world. How should we respond? We should repent and believe in him. How then should we live? We should seek to be holy in all of life, and to live for his glory. What is our future hope? Jesus will come again and make everything new and glorious. You can know these things only through the Bible.

What is special about the Bible? It is its origin – where it comes from. It is not the results of lots of professors sitting down to decide on truth. It is not lots of gurus or religious men giving their best meditations. Such men often make mistakes – even vary large mistakes. Rather, the Bible is exactly the word of God – every word and line are from him. The prophets did not give their own ideas, but they were carried along by God's Spirit – they “spoke from God” (v21). Paul taught the same: 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Jesus had the same opinion: Matthew 22:29, John 10:35. This did not happen like a type-writer; Peter was still Peter as he wrote, and Paul was still Paul. But God guided and led them – they were “carried along” (v21) – so that they wrote without any errors, and revealed God's perfect truth through their words, exactly as he desired. So, the Bible is the word of man and the word of God. It is the only such word. It is the final authority of the Christian, and his only authority for what to believe and do. It is the word of a king. It is not for us to change, to disagree with, or to get rid of. It is the word of a king! We must bow, and obey.

3. Walk in the light! (v19)

What should you do when you have a light in a dark place? You should walk in it! As Peter says, v19, “you will do well to pay attention to it”. Study it carefully and closely. There will be no other light given. God's word alone is truth. Why should he speak again when he has said so much in the Bible? To “pay attention” means more than to know – it also means to practice. To walk in the light is to follow the path that it shows to us. Men have invented other authorities to teach us. Some follow tradition – the things that the elders have done. But the past contains both good and bad. Only the Scriptures can show us which is which. Some follow reason – the things that seem right in their own eyes. But Scripture says that our minds and hearts are corrupt and will lead us astray. Some follow the leaders of their sects. But these are also fallen men like us, and their words and deeds must be judged by Scripture, not the other way round. God has given a clear word for all men of all nations, so that nobody has any excuse.