



## Is Scripture Enough?

Jonathan K. Dodson | 2 Peter 1:16-21 | September 11, 2016

Given Peter's call to godliness, and the surrounding influences toward *ungodliness*, he goes out of his way to remind the church of the *ground for godliness*—Scripture or what we call the Bible. Can we really rely on the Bible? People today know that the supernatural parts are just myth. Why don't we focus on Jesus' moral teaching, especially since most of the Bible was written by men? Peter essentially deals with three things: *Questioning Scripture, Witnessing Scripture, Heeding Scripture*.

### Questioning Scripture

Ardent atheist Sam Harris has said, "It's time that we admitted faith is nothing more than the license religious people give one another to keep believing when reasons fail." In other words, faith is opposed to reason; it doesn't square with the facts. Believe what you like, and if it helps you, fine. But don't insist that the Bible is true. In our passage, Peter responds to the charge that he and the other apostles were promoting a myth about Jesus, "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (16). By using "myth" the opponents in chapter two were putting Christian faith down. At the heart of their view was the belief that Jesus would *not* return nor would there be judgment or salvation, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (3:4). They lived some 30 years after Jesus death and given up. They're not alone. Many people today find it hard to believe in Jesus. Just this week my daughter said, "**It's hard to believe in Jesus sometimes because, well, you can't really see him.**" Our worldview makes it very difficult to accept things we can't see, so people end up cutting out the more supernatural parts of Scripture *like Jesus being divine*. Instead, people often prefer to borrow the **sound moral teachings** of Jesus, say the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have them do unto you). Let's consider what happens if you strip the Bible of the miraculous and just stick with the moral code. Take the Golden rule, *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you* (Matt 6:31). I don't know about you but I have a really hard time following this rule when someone cuts me off on the highway or steals my identity and charges up a credit card. And what about the SOM? Jesus says that the person with lust in their heart has essentially committed adultery, so to avoid hell they should gouge out your eye. Anger? The person who yells a demeaning word is liable to the fire of hell. If we take the moral teachings seriously, Jesus looks mean not moral. And it's true, Jesus does have high standards. So if you peel the Bible of all its supernaturalism, reduce Jesus from a divine Savior to a moral philosopher, you strip the Bible of love. You cut the heart right out Christ. Here's why. The supernatural Jesus is the Son of God who dies for our failure to meet the high moral standards. Out of love, he is willingly prosecuted in our place to offer us redemption, forgiveness, and realignment with God's love. Take that away and all you have is a mean moral Jesus, a terrifying teacher, not a sacrificial, loving God. So you really can't strip the Bible down to a moral Jesus because he doesn't exist. *He says, I and the Father are one. I'm the Lamb of God come to take away the sin of the world. And, "Scripture cannot be broken"* (Jn 10:35). He's saying I'm the divine Savior and Scriptures are reliable. There's no second option. Even Sam Harris agrees, "Either the Bible is the Word of God or it isn't."

## Witnessing Scripture

Now, you may be thinking “But how do I *know* the Bible is reliable?” Maybe it is all just made up and I should walk away from it all because I can see that Jesus doesn’t really permit a pick and choose approach? Peter’s response is to insist he was an *eye and ear* witness of the incarnate, divine Jesus: *but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain (16-18).* Peter says his message isn’t something he made up; it’s something he *witnessed*. An eyewitness was someone who had first-hand knowledge of something. In court, an eyewitness testimony is very powerful because you have someone willing to stand up and say, I saw him do it *with my own two eyes*. That’s what Peter is saying, I saw Jesus do it with my own eyes, and not just my eyes—there were others there too *we ourselves heard... we were with him on the holy mountain!* So what did they see? He sums it up in two words, **honor and glory**. These transport us back to the transfiguration of Christ, an episode on a mountain in Palestine where true nature of Jesus is temporarily revealed. A cloud appears over the mountain, Jesus clothing begins to radiate, and a voice announces from heaven, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*. It’s a witness of what the Scriptures have been saying all along—that the promised Messiah will come in power and glory. And here he is, his clothes lightening white and his face radiates. His true glory pours out of him. Jesus isn’t transformed into something more powerful. His true power is revealed. The cloak of his humanity thrown back to reveal the glory and honor he shares with the Father. Peter, some 30 years later, with death knocking on his door, with plenty of time to back off of his story insists—**this is not a myth; this is the majesty of God in the flesh**. Have you ever done something so exciting you can recall it in vivid detail? Skydiving, hiking, a concert, a cruise? Peter couldn’t shake this experience. He possessed a memory of magnificence. Now some will object, like my daughter, saying, but *I* didn’t see Jesus. Why doesn’t he do a miracle for *me*? If he appeared before me, then I’d believe. It’s interesting that miracles in front of other people or in other generations don’t count. God has to perform for *me*. I’m an individual, entitled to my own opinions, so if I’m going to believe You have to do a personal miracle. Which if you pause to think about that is rather absurd. First it’s entirely inefficient. You’d have the God of the universe running around doing custom miracles for every little person in the world. He wouldn’t have time for anything else, but more shockingly this line of questioning reveals who we think the real god is. God performs for *you*. This inflated view of Self peers down at God demanding he transfigure before your eyes, turn water into wine (or beer or coke). When in reality, if he’s God, he’s peering down at us, asking if we’ll be humble enough to look up and in utter conviction repent of our self-absorption, and believe what he’s already done, accept how he’s already performed (perfectly on our behalf in his life, death and resurrection) so that we don’t have to meet the terrifying glory of Jesus with no defense. He’s not going to do a miracle greater than that. He’s asking you to trust the Scriptures, the historical witness. Now, why use the transfiguration as proof that Christianity isn’t a myth? 1) It reveals the true nature of Jesus but 2) It’s a preview of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. This is what people were denying. The gospel message was *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (16)*. Power and coming are a word pair to indicate his return. The honor and glory were just a glimpse. And when he comes you want to be on the right side of the majestic glory of Christ. Trusting his Word.

## Heeding Scripture

Which brings us to his final point, “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (19). What’s he saying? He’s saying that the appearance of Jesus fulfills the prophecies of Scripture. The Bible is true. Every story is pointing to Christ—the second Adam, Abraham rejoiced to see my day, the Son of David, the true Moses leading us into the promised land. Scripture is enough. The Bible is true. Bank your life on it. Stand on its promises. You don’t need extra miracles or revelations; I’ve given you everything you need, an eye and ear witness to the majestic glory. What you need is to read, study, meditate, memorize, counsel, pray, teach, and preach Scripture. Peter says, you do well to pay attention to it. Are you attentive to the Word? How do you know? It comes out in your prayers? The law of belief is the law of prayer. What you really believe, what you really want comes out in your prayers. His will or your will? Are you praying the promises of God? Does his Word come out of your mouth? It’s what he’ll keep. It cannot be broken. It puts you right in touch with his will. Don’t say you don’t know the will of God with your Bible is closed. When people come to you with a problem, do you open the Bible or settle for your opinion? What’s more sturdy? It cannot be broken. **You see, faith in God’s word isn’t set against reason; it’s trusting the reasonable promises of God!** Faith isn’t just believing; it’s acting on what you say you believe. This what my daughter is learning, what I’m learning, faith is trusting Jesus. He’s not looking for our agreement; he’s summoning our trust. Will you trust his Word, or settle for something less? It’s a **lamp** in the darkness. When you’re walking in the dark, you don’t trust your own judgment. You turn to the light. We need the discerning light of God’s word. Of course, not blind trust. You need to know how to read Scriptures well. Take *Genesis*, a book wildly misinterpreted. It starts tomorrow, and learn how to better read the Bible. Peter says, “knowing that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (20-21). What does he mean by prophecy? He probably means don’t trust the false teachers who are trying to trip you up with an interpretation of the Bible that eliminates the supernatural—the return of Christ, his judgment and salvation. Instead, trust the apostolic, eyewitness interpretation, the people who were with him on the mountain. Trust them, their interpretation. Why? Because Scripture isn’t the product of what men want to say but what God says through them. In other words, the prophecy of Christ’s return, and by extension the whole of Scripture is the very speech of God to you. God doesn’t put the authors of Scripture into a trance; he speaks through their diverse and natural personalities, styles, education, and experience but delivers his supernatural message. The authors, over 60 speaking three different languages, over 2000 years, all sync up like an orchestra. **Each author, an instrument in the hands of the Redeemer**, through which the breath and wisdom of God flows onto the page, all testifying to the honor and glory of Jesus, very God of very God, come miraculously to live a sinless life, be prosecuted to the death, and rise again to defeat sin, death, and evil. Strip the miraculous away, and you’re left with a moral but mean Jesus. Keep it in, and you’re bathed with the love of God, guided by the light of God, to live for the glory of God. In the end, the Bible isn’t written merely to convince you; it’s written to thrill you with the glory and love of Jesus.