

The Revelation of Our Salvation

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:12–21

Code: 1398

I. INTRODUCTION

A Sunday School Celebration

In 1980 I had an opportunity to be in Detroit, Michigan for The International Christian Education Association Celebration. It was the two-hundreth anniversary of Sunday school, begun in 1780 by philanthropist Robert Raikes in England. He arranged for poor and neglected children to learn biblical truths. He had only two requirements for them: that they wash their faces and clean their clothes. From that beginning, Sunday school has become a major institution in our society today.

I was asked to give one of the addresses at the convention. They wanted a perspective on the future. Since I had been studying 2 Peter 1, I thought what could be more fitting than to say what we need for the next two hundred years is exactly what we've been building on for the last two hundred years. We need to remember that the Lord's Word never changes. Our job as teachers and ministers is to cause people to remember the great truths of the Word of God. The Lord doesn't want us to be creative or innovative. When someone claims to have some new teaching, it's probably not true because the Lord builds His church on the old truths of His Word.

An interesting event occurred during the convention. Just before I spoke, a man rode a horse down the center aisle of Cobo Hall. He was dressed as John Wesley. He jumped off the horse and pulled a Bible out of the saddlebag. He proceeded to give a forty-minute dramatization. As the Lord would have it, his text was 2 Peter 1. I had no previous knowledge of that. He described how his (Wesley's) conversion occurred when he understood the truths of 2 Peter, particularly where Peter says that God has given us exceedingly great and precious promises (v. 3). Then I got up and preached on the same chapter. I emphasized that when any of us teach Sunday school or confront someone with the claims of Jesus Christ, we must be sure we remember the things God has taught us in His Word.

A. The Consequences of Forgetting

Remembering and forgetting are important concepts in the Bible.

1. Remembering the commandments

The book of Deuteronomy is a restatement and amplification of God's law. As the children of Israel anticipated entering into the Promised Land and being established as a nation that would be blessed by God, the Lord reiterated the basic standards they were to live by. He expressed His concern that they would forget those standards in the midst of the prosperity, comfort, and joy they would experience in the land. Deuteronomy 8:1 says, "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give unto your fathers." The people of Israel disobeyed God throughout their

wanderings in the wilderness. Now a new generation was ready to enter into the land. God wanted them to remember what their forefathers forgot. Verse 2 says, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years." We're never to forget the commands of God and His work in our lives. Verses 11-19 say, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his ordinances, and his statutes ... lest when thou hast eaten and art full ... thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God ... and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he who giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish."

2. Receiving the condemnation

a) The history

When the people of Israel entered into the Promised Land, they seemed to do all right for a while under the judges and godly men who led them. But then the people decided they wanted a king. They got one--Saul, who was a poor excuse for a king. Following Saul came David, and then David's wise son, Solomon. But after Solomon's reign a disaster occurred: the kingdom split. There were now two kingdoms: the kingdom of Israel in the north, and the kingdom of Judah in the south. Ten tribes went north, and only two remained in the south: Judah and Benjamin.

(1) The captivity of the northern kingdom

The northern kingdom was characterized by idolatry and immorality. By 722 [sc]B.C., the northern kingdom was led into captivity--a captivity from which it never returned. Judah was all that was left after 722 [sc]B.C. The northern kingdom had so abandoned itself to the plan of God that it was dissolved as an entity. At least Judah still had Jerusalem, and Jerusalem still had the Temple. As a result the truth of God was in their midst, at least to some extent. And at least Judah had a few good kings--there wasn't one righteous king in the history of the northern kingdom.

(2) The captivity of the southern kingdom

The captivity of the northern kingdom should have served as an object lesson to Judah that idolatry results in severe penalty. But they never bothered to heed it. So they reached the same point in their history that Israel was just prior to their captivity. They were disobedient, indifferent, hypocritical, immoral, and idolatrous. So, God sent the prophet Jeremiah to them. It was his calling to warn Judah that they were on the same path as the northern kingdom. After they did go into captivity, God sent them the prophet Ezekiel to affirm God's judgment.

b) The judgment

Jeremiah 3 gives us a graphic illustration of the people's sin. God had a message for his people, but He spoke only to Jeremiah. I believe God uses Jeremiah as His messenger to emphasize the severing of His relationship with His people.

(1) Israel's harlotry

In verse 6 Jeremiah says, "The Lord said ... unto me in the days of Josiah, the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done?" What backsliding Israel did was obvious--the people didn't hide anything: "She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot" (v. 6). The Canaanites worshiped Baal. Vestiges of the Canaanite religion influenced Israel because the Jews had refused to obey God by obliterating the Canaanites. Instead, they tolerated them and tried to coexist with them. The Canaanites worshiped Baal and other deities by ascending into a high mountain because they believed that the higher up you went, the closer you got to them. On the mountain they would find the shade of a green tree to avoid the heat. Once there they would carry on their worship of Baal, which was nothing more than a sexual orgy. Israel's harlotry was not only spiritual, but also physical. They practiced that immoral worship on every high

mountain and under every green tree. In verse 7 God says, "I said, after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not." In patience and love God offered Israel His grace and mercy, but Israel said no.

(2) Judah's hypocrisy

God continues, "Her treacherous sister, Judah, saw it" (v. 7). Judah saw Israel's sin and the eventual judgment of God. In verse 8 God says, "I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce, yet her treacherous sister, Judah, feared not, but went and played the harlot also." The consequence of Israel's sin was a divorce from God. The people had been so persistent in their harlotry that they never would come back.

When Judah, the southern sister saw what Israel did, she did the same thing. Verse 9 refers to "the lightness of her harlotry." The Hebrew word translated "lightness" means "boisterous"--having the party spirit. The harlotry of Judah wasn't sneaky: it was a wild, orgiastic party. It was so flagrant that "she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with trees" (v. 9). That means Judah committed adultery with gods made out of stone and wood. Verse 10 says, "Yet for all this her treacherous sister, Judah, hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord." To the idolatry and adultery of Judah you can add hypocrisy. There was no true religion remaining in the northern kingdom, while in the south the people still carried on the ritual in the Temple, but it was entirely hypocritical. Verse 11 says, "The Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah." In a sense, Israel was better off than Judah because nothing is more disgusting to God than hypocrisy.

c) The reason

How did Judah ever reach the place where it would ignore the lesson of Israel's captivity? Verses 20-21 say, "Surely, as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping, and supplications of the children of Israel." In those verses Israel refers to the people of Judah--they are the only true Israel left. The term Israel frequently is used for Judah in the books of the prophets. Who are the people crying on the mountain? I believe they are a remnant. Some claim that pictures the millennium, when Israel cries out to God after they've looked on the one they once pierced (Zech. 12:10). But I see them as a small remnant in Jeremiah's time, and God always has a remnant. But the rest of the nation never responded to Jeremiah, and ultimately it was taken into captivity. In verse 21 God says, "They have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord, their God." How could they possibly forget the Lord? They had some help from false shepherds, who led them in the wrong direction. Then add to that their sin. Judah listened to the wrong voices and did the wrong things. The truth of God began to fade, and they eventually forgot Him. In verse 22 God says, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee: for thou art the Lord, our God." But only the remnant returned to God; the rest didn't, so the nation went into captivity for seventy years.

B. The Conviction of Forgetting

1. In Jeremiah

Forgetting becomes a theme of Jeremiah's prophecy as he speaks of Israel's sin. Listen to what God Himself said about the people's forgetfulness: "My people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer. 2:32), "Thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood" (13:25), "My people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity" (18:15), "How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal" (23:26), and "My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds

have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place" (50:6).

2. In Ezekiel

When Ezekiel prophesied to the captives after they had already gone into captivity, he said the same thing Jeremiah did. The reason they went into captivity is that they forgot God. Ezekiel 22:12 says, "Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God."

3. In Hosea

In Hosea 4:6 God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

4. In Psalm 119

In stark contrast the psalmist said, "I will not forget thy Word" (v. 16), "Yet do I not forget thy statutes," (v. 83), "I will never forget thy precepts" (v. 93), "Yet do I not forget thy law" (v. 109), "Yet do I not forget thy precepts" (v. 141), "I do not forget thy law" (v. 153), and "I do not forget thy commandments" (v. 176).

So how do we remember? By constantly reinforcing the truth and avoiding false teachers. Second Timothy 2:21 says that if a man avoids false teachers, "he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and fit for the master's use." We also have to avoid sin. First Peter 2:1-2 says, "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that ye may grow by it." When you set aside false teaching and sin, and absorb the Word of God, your mind will be full of biblical truth and your spiritual responses will become involuntary.

Review

II. THE MINISTRY OF REMEMBRANCE (vv. 12-15)

III. THE SPECIFICS OF REMEMBRANCE (vv. 1-11, 16-21)

A. The Reality of Our Salvation (vv. 1-2)

B. The Riches of Our Salvation (vv. 3-4)

C. The Responsibility of Our Salvation (vv. 5-7)

D. The Reward of Our Salvation (v. 8)

E. The Rest of Our Salvation (vv. 9-11)

Lesson

F. The Revelation of Our Salvation (vv. 16-18)

1. Firsthand experience (v. 16)

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

a) The scoffers

The main issue Peter addressed in his second epistle is the return of Christ. False teachers claimed there would be no Second Coming or judgment of the earth. Second Peter 3:3-4 speaks of "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

b) The eyewitness

Peter contradicts the scoffers directly by saying, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16). But how could Peter see the Second Coming when it had not yet taken place?

(1) The principle of discipleship

In Matthew 16:24-26 Jesus says to His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" We're to get spiritual priorities in order.

(2) The promise of the Second Coming

Verse 27 says, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Jesus told the disciples to get their lives in order because He would return to reward them.

Jesus will return in "the glory of his Father." John 1:14 says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." The glory of the Father is the fullness of deity. Christ is the glory of God, but that glory was veiled in His humanness. One day He will return in blazing glory when He will pull aside the veil of His flesh.

(3) The preview of the Second Coming

(a) Promised to the disciples

After telling the disciples about His return, Jesus said, "There are some standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). Some of the disciples wouldn't die before they saw Christ in His Second- Coming glory. But how could they possibly live to see the Second Coming?

(b) Revealed to the disciples

All three synoptic gospels--Matthew, Mark, and Luke--follow Christ's promises with the same incident we're about to see in Matthew 17. Without a doubt this incident is the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 16:28. Matthew 17:1 says, "After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them into an high mountain privately." James was the first whose blood was shed on account of Christ. John and Peter were the key men in the foundation of the Jerusalem church.

i) The transformation of the Son

Verse 2 says Jesus "was transfigured before them; and his face did shine like the sun." We know it's not possible to look at the sun for more than a few seconds. Can you imagine seeing Christ's face shining like the sun? Verse 2 also says, "His raiment was as white as the light." We know the glory of God was hidden behind the veil of His flesh, but when He was transformed, Jesus opened that veil and blazing glory burst forth. The three disciples were no longer seeing the Son in a state of humiliation, but of glorification. It was the kind of glory He will manifest at His Second Coming. His

transformation was a preview, and the fulfillment of Matthew 16:28.

ii) The trauma of the disciples

Matthew 17:3-6 says, "There appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three booths; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were very much afraid." Peter's joy suddenly turned to total fear when he heard the voice of God. I'm sure I would have had a similar reaction. Verse 7-8 say, "Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, except Jesus only." The transfiguration ended just as fast as it began.

Peter, James, and John saw the power and glory of Jesus in a manifestation of His Second Coming glory. The scene was like a mini-kingdom: Christ in glory represents His future role as King of kings. Moses in glory represents the redeemed who died. Elijah in glory represents the redeemed who will be translated or raptured. Peter, James, and John represent the believers who live on the earth during the Kingdom. The multitudes at the foot of the mountain could represent the multitudes who will witness Christ's Second Coming.

2. Firsthand revelation (vv. 17-18)

"[Jesus] received from God, the Father, honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

Peter could never forget such a personal experience because God manifested Himself in such an incredible way. John had the same reaction. In 1 John 1:1, 3 he said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ... declare we unto you." John saw and touched the glorified Christ. In Galatians 1:12 Paul says, "I neither received it [the gospel] of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

A Personal Application for Remembering

Peter remembered the revelation of God. How can his experience apply to us? I believe God endeavors to help us remember by frequently revealing Himself in our lives. I look back over my life and I can remember many things God has accomplished. To forget them I would have to deliberately determine to forget. But as long as I determine to remember, I'm flooded with memories of what God has done. Praise is simply reciting what God has done.

When I was a little boy, my father preached a sermon at a church in Indiana. I can't remember what he said, but I do remember that I was under great conviction. I went to him and we sat on the steps of the church after everyone had left. He asked me, "What's wrong, Johnny?" I said, "I don't know--I just don't know if Jesus is in my heart." We then prayed together, and I felt a sense of God's presence and forgiveness in my life. Years later I can remember an automobile accident that's as vivid to me as if it had happened today. On that day God took me forward another great step and added another dimension of insight into my life. I can remember many things God has done. As long as I will to remember those things, I'll never forget them. But if I expose myself to false doctrine and false principles of living, I can wash those memories away. But I choose not to do so by His strength. I have seen the providential caring, loving, and sustaining hand of God in my life many times. I've seen people come to Christ several times. I'm committed to remembering those things because they strengthen my confidence in God for the future.

People ask me, "Do you think your church can continue to grow? Do you think you can reach around the world with your outreach ministries? Do you think you'll have enough money to build a new building?" I say, "God has done it in the past, and that's enough to make me believe He will do it in the future." I can remember when I first came to Grace Community Church and stood up in the chapel on a Wednesday night. Thirty-five people were there that night. I've seen what God can do by the power of His Word and His Spirit!

G. The Resource of Our Salvation (vv. 19-21)

You can't remember the reality, the riches, the responsibility, the reward, the rest, or the revelation of your salvation unless you know the resource of it.

1. The certainty of prophecy (v. 19_a)

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy"

We have a more sure verification of God's truth than a personal manifestation of God. Why? Because you cannot always believe your senses. Your experiences have to be qualified by an authoritative source, and nothing is more authoritative than biblical truth. If you want to know for sure that there will be a Second Coming, a better proof of it than a personal revelation of God is that Scripture says there will be one.

2. The warning of prophecy (vv. 19_b)

"Unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts"

Peter tells us to remember the Word of God. The Bible is the issue, not what false prophets have to say. Don't listen to people who deny the truth. You know God is alive and at work because you've experienced Him, but more than that, you know it because His Word says so. The Bible proves itself to be a divine book because of the prophecies it fulfills and of the accuracy of all its historical and scientific details.

The Greek word translated "sure" means "certain" or "firm." It can refer to strong, firm roots. Since the Bible is so certain, you can use it to defend the Second Coming, or any other biblical truth. Verse 19 says God's Word is "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise." That acts as a parenthesis between "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed ... in your hearts." The day's dawning represents the Kingdom of Christ. The "day star" is Christ Himself (cf. Rev. 22:16). Peter is saying that until the dawning of the millennial day when Christ returns, you must look to the Word of God as a man in darkness looks toward light. The only light the believer has in this dark world is the Word of God. When the millennial kingdom comes and we enter into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ, we'll no longer need the Scriptures because we will have full knowledge.

3. The origin of prophecy (vv. 20-21)

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation [origination]. For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Peter was not talking about the interpretation of Scripture but the source of it. The Greek word epilusis is best defined as "origination" in verse 20. That word is not found anywhere else in the New Testament so we must determine its meaning from the context alone. In the next verse Peter speaks

of how prophecy originated.

We can be confident in Scripture because we know it didn't come from any private origination--it is not a human invention. Rather, "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (v. 21). The Greek word translated "moved" was used of wind moving a sail. The apostles and prophets were borne along by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave the apostles and prophets the very words to say and write.

Why should you run to God's Word? Because it's authored by God's Spirit. False prophets will either deny parts of the Word of God or add something to it. You don't need either.

Conclusion

Peter says to remember the Word. That's what Jesus says in John 15:20, "Remember the word that I said unto you." There's nothing more important than remembering the Word of God. It is the source of everything else. If you want to remember the reality, the riches, the responsibility, the reward, the rest, and the revelations of your salvation, you'll find them in the resource of your salvation--the Bible. We live in a dark world and must run to the only light there is--Scripture, which came by God through His Holy Spirit.

We're to remember God's Word with a sense of urgency. Second Peter 3:18 concludes, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever." We grow in grace and knowledge by remembering the Word of God.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What did the Lord fear would happen once Israel entered the Promised Land?
2. What was the eventual result of Israel's demand for a king?
3. What happened to the northern kingdom? Why?
4. Describe the worship practices of the Canaanites. How did their practices influence Israel?
5. What did Judah learn from God's judgment of Israel? What kind of attitude did they display?
6. What ultimately happened to Judah? Why?
7. What is one of the themes of Jeremiah's prophecy? Cite some Scriptures to support your answer.
8. How can we remember the truth of God?
9. What did the scoffers of Peter's day claim about the Second Coming (2 Pet. 3:3-4;)?

10. How did Peter contradict the scoffers' claim (see pp. 6-7; 2 Pet. 1:16)?
11. What did Christ promise the disciples in Matthew 16:27-28?
12. How can we be sure that the incident in Matthew 17:1-7 is the fulfillment of Matthew 16:28?
13. Describe what happened when Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John.
14. In what way was the scene of the transfiguration like a mini-kingdom?
15. Who in addition to Peter wrote of the impact the transfiguration had on him and where?
16. What can Peter's experience on the mount of transfiguration lead us to recall?
17. What is a more important verification of God's truth than a personal manifestation? Explain.
18. How did Scripture originate (2 Pet. 1:20-21)?
19. Why is the resource of our salvation the most important thing we can remember?

Pondering the Principles

1. What lessons can you learn from the examples of both Israel and Judah? God offered Israel an opportunity to return to Him after all the sins they had committed. What does that tell you about the grace and mercy of God? When Israel did not return to God, He allowed them to enter into captivity. What does that tell you about the importance of repentance? Judah was given an opportunity to learn some lessons from God's judgment of Israel. Yet they ignored those lessons and continued in blatant sin. What does that tell you those who don't heed the warnings God gives? Do take Peter's instruction to heart and commit to memory: "Putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Pet. 2:1-2, NASB).
2. We can remember what God has accomplished in our lives by determining not to forget. When we expose ourselves to false doctrines and principles, we can lose those memories. Make a list of each thing God has accomplished in your life. For many of you it will be a long list, but remember as much as you can. Each time God does something new, add it to your list. Plan to review your list periodically. Now thank God for all the things He has done in your life.

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