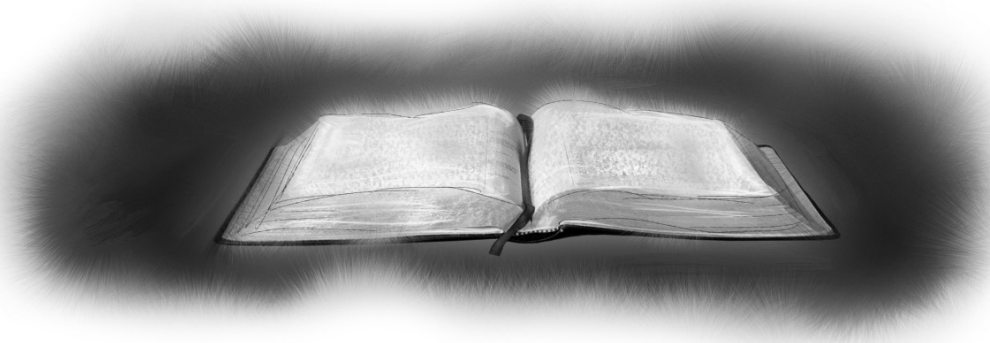


The Bible and Foretelling the Future



SABBATH—MAY 27

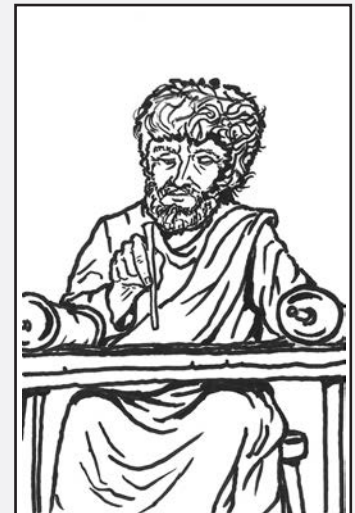
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 53:1–12; Daniel 7:13, 14; 2 Peter 1:16–20; Matthew 17:1–6.

MEMORY VERSE: “We also have the message of the prophets [special messengers from God to His people]. This message can be trusted completely” (2 Peter 1:19, NIV).

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY of the letters of Peter. One point should stand out: how sure he is about what he believes.

Peter even tells us why he has such faith and trust. He says that we do not believe “clever stories” made up by men (2 Peter 1:16, NIV). He says this because such stories were a part of the idol-worshiping religions of Peter’s time. Instead, Peter is sure of what he believes for two reasons.

First, he was an eyewitness to “our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:16, NIV). But Peter’s second reason is perhaps even more important. Why? Because almost everyone else will *not* have seen Jesus with his or her own eyes as Peter did. So what is Peter’s second reason for why he is so sure about what he believes? He is so sure because his faith is founded on “the message of the prophets” (2 Peter 1:19, NIV). So Peter again goes back to the Bible. He points to the prophecies for proof of who Jesus is. Prophecies are special messages from God to His people. Prophecies foretell future events. No doubt, the prophecies that Peter talks about are some of the same ones that Jesus quoted about Himself (Matthew 26:54; Luke 24:27). So if Jesus and Peter took the Bible this seriously, we should too.



Peter is so sure of what he believes because his faith is founded on the words of the prophets.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Psalm 22)



The first part of the prophecies about Jesus and His suffering on the cross has come true. So we can be certain about the last part of the prophecies also coming true.

All throughout his letters, Peter shows he is sure about what he believes. He knows what he is talking about because he knows Jesus, the One whom he is talking about. Peter knows that Jesus is the One the Old Testament prophets pointed to. He knows the Bible is the Written Word of God. And Peter's trust in the Written Word helps him know the Word (Jesus) who "became a human being" (John 1:14, NIV).

In 1 Peter 1:10–12, Peter points his readers to the Hebrew Bible. He points to what the prophets taught about Jesus. According to (as stated by) Peter, the Holy Spirit makes clear in the Old Testament two important truths about Jesus. The first truth is the "sufferings of the Messiah." And the second truth is the "glory that would follow" (1 Peter 1:11, NIV).

Read Psalm 22; Isaiah 53:1–12; Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 13:7; Jeremiah 33:14, 15; and Daniel 7:13, 14. These Old Testament verses foretell many things about Jesus. What things do they teach?

In 1 Peter 1:10–12, Peter assures his readers that they occupy a very special place in salvation history. Why? For this reason: much more had been made known to them than had been made known to the prophets of old. The prophets indeed spoke to their own times. But important parts of their messages would not happen until the coming of Christ.

The prophets foretold certain things that came true only in the time in which Peter's readers lived. These readers received the truth from those "who have preached the good news to you. . . with the help of the Holy Spirit" (1 Peter 1:12, NIV). So the gospel was preached to the people. As a result, they knew the truth about Christ's suffering and death on the cross in much more detail than the prophets of old knew. Of course, the believers in Peter's day will have to wait with us for "the glory that would follow" (1 Peter 1:11, NIV). The first part of those prophecies has happened. So we can be certain that the last part also will happen and come true.

What Bible promises have taken place in your life? Which ones are you still waiting for? What do they mean to you? How can you learn to hold on to them, even in hard times?

EYEWITNESSES OF ROYAL BEAUTY AND GREATNESS (2 Peter 1:16–18)

Read 2 Peter 1:16–18. What other proof does Peter say he has for his faith in Jesus?

We know that Peter’s faith is founded on Bible prophecy (special messages) from the Old Testament. But Peter is also an eyewitness to many of the things that he preaches about. Peter says that the Christian faith is not founded on “clever stories” made up by men (2 Peter 1:16, NIV). Instead, the Christian faith is founded on real events that happened in history.

We can read about Peter’s experiences in the first four books of the New Testament. These four books are also called the Gospels. According to (as stated in) the Gospels, Peter is there for many of the main events in the life and work of Jesus. He is there for the preaching, the teaching, and the miracles. Peter witnesses the early miracle of the fish in Luke 5:4–6. And he sees Jesus in Galilee after His return to life from the dead (John 21:15).

In 2 Peter 1:17, 18, Peter focuses (puts attention) on an event. It is one that he personally sees. What is it? And what is the special meaning of that event?

Peter focuses on one event that he witnesses personally. It is the transfiguration of Jesus. A transfiguration is a change in form or appearance. During that event, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to the top of a mountain to pray (Luke 9:28). While there, Jesus is changed before their eyes. His face shines. And His clothes become dazzling white (Matthew 17:2; Luke 9:29). Jesus is joined by Moses and Elijah. And a voice from heaven says, “‘This is My Son, and I love him. I am very pleased with him’” (Matthew 17:5, NIV).

Peter sees a lot in his time with Jesus. But this event stands out. It shows that Jesus is God’s Son. It shows that His time on earth is spent according to God’s plan. And it shows that Jesus has a special relationship with the Father.

Think of an event that has had a deep effect on your spiritual life and faith. What event was it? How did it affect you? And what does it mean to you today? Why do you think it had the power that it did?



The Transfiguration stands out for Peter. It shows Jesus is the Son of God.

THE MORNING STAR IN OUR HEARTS (2 Peter 1:19)



Peter makes a clear link between studying the Bible and having a relationship with Jesus, who is the “Morning Star.”

Read 2 Peter 1:19 carefully. What is Peter saying that is so important to us, even today?

In this verse, Peter shows there is a difference between light and darkness. We can see this difference in many places in the Bible (Genesis 1:4; John 1:5; Isaiah 5:20; Ephesians 5:8). For Peter, the Bible itself shines like a light in a “dark” place. (Some Bible translations use the word “squalid [filthy]” or “dirty” in place of the word *dark*.) That is why Peter is so clear that we need to follow the Bible until the day Jesus comes. We are fallen humans. We live in a fallen and dark world. We need the power of God to lead us out of darkness and into the light. And that light is Jesus.

Peter points his readers to a goal. To understand the goal more clearly, let us look at how the New King James Bible translates the part of the verse that says “the day Jesus comes” (NirV). The New King James Bible words it this way: “until the day dawns [comes; rises].” Now, some believe that the words “until the day dawns” mean the second coming of Jesus. And that truly is the goal of all our hopes. At the same time, the idea of the “Morning Star” (NirV) rising in our hearts sounds like it is happening right now. And it sounds more personal. First, the “Morning Star” means Jesus (Revelation 2:28; Revelation 22:16). And to have the Morning Star rise in our hearts is a word picture. It helps us to understand the idea of taking hold of Jesus. And we must take hold of Him fully. Then we can experience how real the living Christ is in our lives. Jesus should not be just a church teaching. He should be the center of our lives. He should be the Source of our hope and faith. So Peter makes a clear link between studying the Bible and having a saving relationship with Jesus, who is the “Morning Star.”

In other words, the light must shine in us. Then we will spread it to others. “The whole earth is to be lit up with the glory of God’s truth. The light is to shine to all lands and all peoples. And it is to shine forth from those who have received it. Jesus is the Day-star. The Day-star has risen upon us. And we are to flash its light upon the pathway of those in darkness.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, page 220.

How does your own study of the Bible help you to know Jesus better?

THE MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY (2 Peter 1:19–21)

Read 2 Peter 1:19–21. What prophecies does Peter speak about in these verses? What does he mean when he says that *no* prophecy of the Bible “ever came from a prophet’s own understanding of things” (NirV)?

Peter makes it clear that the Christian faith is not founded on “clever stories” made up by men (2 Peter 1:16, NirV). Peter offers us two facts to prove his point. First, there are eyewitnesses who saw Jesus when God the Father gave Him honor and glory (2 Peter 1:16–18). And second, there are Bible prophecies that foretell Jesus’ coming (2 Peter 1:19–21).

Peter also says, “No prophecy in [the Bible] ever came from a prophet’s own understanding of things” (2 Peter 1:20, NirV). In declaring this truth, Peter is not forbidding us to study the Bible for ourselves. That kind of thinking does not agree with what he writes in 1 Peter 1:13. Instead, Peter approves of the way the prophets of old carefully searched the Bible to learn the meaning of the prophecies they had been given (1 Peter 1:10).

Then what does Peter mean? The New Testament church grew together and studied together. Christians were part of a larger body (1 Corinthians 12:12–14). Peter warns against the kind of study in which a Christian rejects any truth or light from the community of believers or the churches. So in working together, we, too, grow together as a community. This is because the Spirit works with the community and the individuals in it. Truth can be shared, sharpened, and deepened this way. But what if someone works alone and refuses to take advice from others or the church. That person is likely to come to a wrong understanding, especially with prophecy.

In the next verses, we find a good reason for Peter to make this point. He writes to Christians who have among them “false prophets” and “false teachers” (2 Peter 2:1). Peter urges them to take their interpretation (explanation) of the Bible to the church as a whole for approval. After all, many people have strayed from the truth into error because they refused to listen to the advice from a church led by the Spirit. Falling away into error was a danger back then, and it remains one today.

Overall, why is it so important to be open to the wisdom and advice of the church? At the same time, what are the limits on how far we should go in yielding to others?



Many have fallen into error because they refused to listen to the advice from a church led by the Spirit.

THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES (2 Timothy 3:15–17)



Peter says that prophecy in the Bible is like a lamp. It shines in a dark place. It guides us in how we should live and what we should do.

As we have seen, Peter places great importance on the Bible. Second Peter 1:19–21 shows how important the Bible is to our Christian experience. It declares that the Bible was created by God’s power. Peter’s point is especially clear in 2 Peter 1:21. In other words, the Bible is not the result of human thought and feeling in the way other books are. Instead, the Bible is a book produced through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit “guided the prophets as they spoke” (NIRV).

Read 2 Timothy 3:15–17. How do these verses help us to understand the importance of the Bible in our lives? How do these verses support the truth of 2 Peter 1:19–21?

Paul warns Timothy about the dangers facing him and the church. Then Paul gives a short outline in 2 Timothy 3:16. It teaches the importance of the Bible.

Let us look at the three points that Paul says the Bible is useful for.

Teaching, or doctrine: Doctrines are the teachings of the church. Each doctrine should be Christ-centered. And each should teach us something that helps us know how to live according to what God wants. “His plan is good and pleasing and perfect” (Romans 12:2, NIRV).

Correcting our mistakes: Paul tells Timothy that the Bible is useful for “correcting our mistakes. . . . It is useful for training us to do what is right” (2 Timothy 3:16, NIRV). Peter makes the same point when he says that the prophecy in the Bible is like a lamp. It shines in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19). What Peter means is that the Bible guides us in how we should live our lives. It teaches us what is right and wrong behavior. The Holy Spirit led men to write the Bible. So the Bible has the power to show us God’s plan for our lives.

“How to be saved”: Paul says that the Bible is useful for making our lives whole again. It teaches us “how to be saved” (2 Timothy 3:15, NIRV). Paul points out that the Bible leads us to Jesus. This is because salvation is built on the belief that Jesus died for our sins. So the Bible gives us doctrine, correction, and the knowledge of salvation. No wonder the Bible is like “a light shining in a dark place. It will shine until the day Jesus comes. Then the Morning Star will rise in [our] hearts” (2 Peter 1:19, NIRV).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “It is the first and highest duty of every thinking and reasoning person to learn from the Bible what truth is. Then he or she is to walk in the light of that truth and encourage others to follow. We should day by day study the Bible carefully. We should weigh every thought. And we should study how one verse can be used to explain another verse. With God’s help we are to form our opinions for ourselves. Why? Because we are to answer for ourselves before God.

“The truths most clearly shown in the Bible have been covered in doubt and darkness by learned men. These men pretend to have great wisdom. But they teach that the Bible has a secret meaning that cannot be understood. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: ‘You are mistaken because you do not know the Scriptures [the Old Testament]. And you do not know the power of God’ (Mark 12:24, NIV). The words of the Bible should be explained according to their obvious meaning, unless a symbol, or word picture, is used. Christ has given the promise: ‘Here is how someone can find out whether my teaching comes from God or from me. That person must choose to do what God wants [him or her] to do’ (John 7:17, NIV). Suppose that men and women would accept the Bible as it reads. And suppose there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds. Then a work would take place that would make angels glad. It would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War Between Christ and Satan]*, pages 598, 599.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What other important rules are involved in coming to a clear understanding of the Bible?
- ② Martin Luther wrote, “The Bible is its own light.” He means that the books of the Bible agree with one another. One part can be used to help us understand other parts. What are some examples of this rule that you can find?
- ③ Suppose someone were to ask you how studying the Bible can deepen your walk with the Lord. What would you answer?



Our first and highest duty is “to learn from the Bible what truth is. Then we are to walk in the light of that truth and encourage others to follow.”