

2 Peter 1:16-24

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[0 : 00] How would you react if you're on the tube one day and a guy gets on and he's holding a sign and says, Judgment Day is coming. And he starts to speak urgently to anyone who will listen on the train.

Saying, the Lord Jesus is coming back. He will judge the whole world and rule over the earth. Are you ready for his return? And what's your first reaction if you're on that train?

Is it embarrassment? Just calm down. Stop making a fuss. I'm not making a comment on whether evangelism is effective on the tube or not.

But the point is, I think the reason our reaction might be embarrassment is we've lost touch of the reality of the second coming. It doesn't always feel real to us.

Because if we're utterly convinced that Jesus is coming back and he will judge the world, our response to that guy can't be, calm down, mate. What's the big deal?

[1 : 03] We might think there are better ways to tell others, but the second coming of Jesus Christ is a huge event. It's monumental. If it's real, it changes everything.

It's not something that we can just say, what's the big deal? It's a huge deal. The claim of the apostles is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will return to earth as King of Kings, as judge of the world.

It's not a vague spiritual thing that's true in our hearts. The apostles announced that he is physically coming to inaugurate a new physical creation in which he will actually reign as King.

He will literally judge the world. This is an earthy reality, just like his first coming into our world. In our churches, it's easy for this to fade into the background.

We don't deny that Jesus is coming back. We actually confess it every week when we say the apostles' creed. Do you remember those words? He will come to judge the living and the dead.

[2 : 12] That's what we believe. But it can become distant in our minds. It's the biggest event ever, but we hardly ever talk about it.

It doesn't really touch our daily lives. It's lost its urgency and reality. Do we feel the gravity of this certain future event?

Peter's letter is so relevant to us today, just as all God's word is. We wrestle with the same problems and dangers that the first readers did. And back then, there were false teachers saying, Jesus is not really coming back.

I mean, if he's coming, where is he? It's been a while. Do you really believe that there's going to be a day of judgment? You guys need to just calm down and live a little. Stop being so worried about sin.

Live how you want. There's no day of accountability. So Peter writes this letter to say two big things. Jesus is coming back.

[3 : 14] And godliness matters. We saw last week that godliness matters because it's the goal of the gospel. And godliness matters because it will keep us from falling.

But now Peter starts to get into that other big point. Jesus is coming back. And we face a similar problem to the first readers. We can easily push the day of judgment, the second coming, so far into the background that it has no effect on how we live now.

It can be so distant that it doesn't really seem real anymore. Peter wants to help us with that. So he's asking this big question. How do we know that Jesus is really coming back to judge and to rule over the earth?

The first thing we're going to see is that the transfiguration proves it. That's our first point. The transfiguration proves it. And that will make more sense hopefully as we go along.

Have a look at chapter 1, verse 16. Peter says, For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 24] In other words, when we told you that Jesus will come again in power, we weren't making it up. This isn't a clever story that we concocted, a legend about the return of a king.

We didn't sit down as all the apostles and think, what would make a plausible story that we can tell? By the way, when he says the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, he's not talking about Jesus' first coming.

He's talking about the return of Jesus, the second coming. That's one of the big themes of this whole letter. Look over for a second to chapter 3, verse 3.

It says there, Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, where is the promise of his coming? In other words, they're saying, I don't think Jesus is really coming back.

If he's coming back, where is he? And they're invested in this idea that Jesus isn't coming back because they want to keep on sinning. That's why Peter says they're following their own sinful desires.

[5 : 28] They don't want a day of judgment, a day of accountability. But Peter says, we're not making this stuff up. Jesus is coming back. And here's how I know.

Look again, chapter 1, verse 16. The end of that verse says, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. These are not myths, but eyewitness testimony.

What's Peter talking about? What did he see which made him certain that Jesus is coming back? Well, he's talking about an event that he saw with his own eyes that proves that Jesus will come again.

It proves it. What is this event? Well, it's called the transfiguration. Look at verse 17. For when he received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this very voice, born from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. Do you remember this episode, the transfiguration?

[6 : 39] We read it earlier from Matthew's Gospel, when Peter and James and John went up a mountain with Jesus and he was transfigured before them. And that word just means transformed or changed.

Jesus took on the form of his heavenly glory. And so he was shining like the sun. His glory wasn't hidden anymore like it normally was when he walks around on earth.

But did you hear what Jesus said the week before the transfiguration? In Matthew 16, verse 27, Jesus is talking with his disciples about his second coming, when he's going to return to judge and to rule the earth.

And here's what he says. For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he's done. That's the judgment, the second coming.

But listen to what he says next. Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

[7 : 45] Isn't that strange? It sounds like Jesus is saying some of the people who were with him right there would see his second coming before they died. But all the people with him then are now dead, and Jesus still hasn't come back.

So how does that work? Well, because six days later, they saw it. The very next verse says, After six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. The apostles saw a preview of the second coming.

They saw Jesus in his glory, the way he would appear when he comes again. They saw him appointed as end times king and judge.

Now I used to think the whole point of the transfiguration was to show the apostles that Jesus is God, that he's the Son of God. And so they got to see his glory. They heard the Father saying, This is my Son.

[8 : 55] But that's not really what it's all about. It's not just to show Jesus' divine identity. This is a vision of the moment when Jesus is appointed as end times king and judge.

The apostles got to see ahead of time a preview of the second coming. That's why in Matthew 17 verse 9, When they'd come down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, Tell no one the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

This is a vision of the future. That's what Peter's writing about here. He knows the significance of what he saw. Because this is straight out of Psalm 2.

This was all prophesied. Psalm 2 is about that moment when Jesus is appointed as the end times king and judge. And in Psalm 2 verse 7, we hear the decree which makes Jesus king.

Verse 7, the Messiah says, I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my Son. Today I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession.

[10:08] Do you see what he's saying? Psalm 2 is the moment where God decrees, This one, he is my chosen one, to judge the world and to reign over the earth.

And didn't those words sound familiar? You are my Son. That's what we just read in 2 Peter, about the transfiguration. The voice boomed from heaven. This is my beloved Son.

It's the same decree of Psalm 2 that we hear at the transfiguration. That's why in verse 17, back in 2 Peter, it doesn't say, when we saw him honour and glory.

It says when he received honour and glory from God the Father. This is him being given the office of the end times king and judge.

Now you might think that's strange because Jesus wasn't appointed king until after his resurrection. Acts chapter 13 tells us that Psalm 2 was fulfilled by Jesus' resurrection, not by his transfiguration.

[11:13] What's going on? Well again, the transfiguration was a vision ahead of time, of the moment where the resurrected and the ascended Lord Jesus was appointed as king and judge of the earth.

He will come again in power. We need to get our heads around this. The transfiguration was a snapshot in history of Jesus' future post-resurrection glory.

That's what they saw. They saw what Daniel saw in his vision of the Son of Man coming in glory on the clouds of heaven.

They saw what Ezekiel saw in his vision of one sitting on the throne looking like gleaming metal with fire and brightness all around him. They saw what Stephen saw when he said, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

They saw what John described in the book of Revelation when he saw Jesus with eyes of fire and feet like bronze, his face shining like the sun in full strength.

[12:23] This is Jesus in his glory, the one who is king and judge of the world. And after seeing that, how can you think that he will not reign, that he will not judge the world?

Can you imagine the effect that that sight would have had on Peter and on the others? Imagine being in his shoes and seeing those things. Would you ever doubt Jesus' second coming after that? If you heard the decree yourself, that voice from heaven, this is my Son. God the Father was quoting Psalm 2. And he didn't need to finish the quote.

He knew what he was saying. Jesus will be king and judge of the world. Have you ever watched the footage of the Queen's coronation?

When a British monarch gets crowned, there's a ceremony in which they're formally invested with regalia and crowned Westminster Abbey. And it's a glorious ceremony.

[13:24] The Queen arrives in the gold state coach. This carriage that's covered in gold, costing three and a half million pounds. And she's dressed in royal robes.

A crown is placed on her head with thousands of diamonds and hundreds of pearls. And she's presented to and acclaimed by the people.

This is our Queen. But imagine if one of the attendees who's sat there watching as the Queen is crowned, he leans over and whispers to the person sitting next to him, She's not really going to be Queen.

What? We just saw her crowned as Queen. No, she'll never be Queen. That would be ridiculous, wouldn't it? Peter and James and John saw the coronation ceremony of the Lord Jesus, where he was appointed King and Judge.

It was shown to them ahead of time. But it was real. It would be insane for them to say, Oh, he's not really going to rule over the earth. He's not really going to judge. They saw it.

[14 : 33] That's why they knew for sure. Let me ask you, do you believe Peter's eyewitness testimony here? When he says, verse 16, We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Do you believe that? Most of the apostles died for their testimony. They were utterly convinced that Jesus is coming back.

And you. How do we know that Jesus is really coming back to judge and rule over the earth? Because the transfiguration proves it.

That's Peter's first reason that we should be confident in Jesus' return. But he's got another reason too. The transfiguration proves it, but also the prophets foretold it.

That's our second point. The prophets foretold it. Have a look at verse 19. Peter says, 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.

[15 : 45] The prophetic word. What Peter's saying is this. This claim that we're making, this claim that Jesus is coming back because we saw it, that's not coming out of thin air.

It's not something that's just arrived with us, the apostles. We're the last in a long history of people who have also seen this reality. The prophets. Peter says, We're not bringing something new. We're confirming what has been promised for ages and centuries, by prophet after prophet after prophet. What do the prophets see? Well, the prophets said over and over again, The Messiah will judge the nations and he will reign as king forever.

We saw that even in Psalm 2 that we were just talking about. I'm just going to pick out a few examples, but this is everywhere. Here's what Jeremiah said two and a half thousand years ago. Jeremiah 23 verse 5. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king, and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

[16 : 55] He's going to reign. He's going to judge. Isaiah 42 verse 1. Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one, in whom I delight. I will put my spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.

Daniel 7 verse 14. To him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall never be destroyed. It's all over the place. The prophets consistently foretell that the Messiah will come and rule over the earth, over all the nations in the world, and he will judge them.

From the very beginning, God has been saying, this will happen. And he's been saying it through his prophets. Now it seems like the false teachers weren't convinced by the prophets.

They were saying, how do you trust prophecy? What these people said so long ago. Isn't that just the interpretation of the prophets? Everyone's got a different interpretation, haven't they?

[18 : 06] It's not the same thing as facts. Isn't that exactly what people are saying today? That's nice for you, but it's just your interpretation. Well, look what Peter says in verse 20.

Knowing this, first of all, 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.

Peter says prophecy is not the prophets' own subjective interpretation that they might have got wrong. That's not how it works. No prophecy of scripture ever came from someone's own interpretation.

This is God speaking. Men spoke from God. When you read the prophets, God is speaking to you. He speaks through his appointed prophets.

It wasn't possible for them to get the message wrong. The Holy Spirit was using them as an instrument to speak to God's people. They were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 3.16 says, All scripture is breathed out by God.

[19 : 19] That's why we call scripture God's word. We don't say it's Isaiah's word or it's Jeremiah's word. So it's God's word through the prophets. He used their personality and their circumstances on all of that.

But this is God's word. It's a bit like studying Shakespeare in school. Did you ever have to read Shakespeare in school? And you're supposed to analyse his writing to try and figure out what he was trying to say.

And often people come up with wildly different ideas of what's the meaning behind his writings. He was making this point or he was making this point. Maybe your classmate has a particular interpretation of what they think that Shakespeare was saying.

But it's not always convincing, is it? Sometimes it sounds like their interpretation, and you're not convinced that that's really what was in Shakespeare's mind. Well, the prophets are not like your classmates trying to figure out and interpret Shakespeare, but probably getting most of it wrong. The prophets got God's message 100% right because it was actually God speaking through them. That means we need to receive God's word as God's word.

[20 : 36] The almighty God is speaking directly with a definitive message that calls for a particular response. You can't hear God's word through the prophets and just say, Well, I don't really like the idea of God judging.

I prefer to think of God as kind and forgiving, so I don't interpret it that way. The world will be judged one day. Well, I don't like the idea of Jesus ruling over everyone because authority is always oppressive.

I think of Jesus more as a friend, an advisor. When we need help, he's there for us. There's only one appropriate response when God speaks.

That's to believe and to obey. God's word is actually amazing. These prophets were very different people at all sorts of periods in history and having radically different perspectives.

And yet all their prophecies agree down to the details. And loads of it has already come true. This can't happen unless God is speaking through them.

[21 : 47] How do we know Jesus is really coming back to judge and rule over the earth? Because the prophets foretold this. What does this mean for us?

We've seen that the transfiguration proves Jesus' second coming. We've seen that the prophets foretold his reign and judgment. What should we do about that? Well, Peter tells us, verse 19, And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which he 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. Pay attention to the word.

That's our final point. Pay attention to the word. Peter paints a picture of this age, this era that we're in. He calls it a dark place.

It's night time. We're waiting for the morning. We're waiting, verse 19, until the day dawns. And the sun finally rises in the sky and shines on us.

[22 : 53] That will be the beginning of the new age, the new era. But right now, it's dark. What is it that will bring the day? That will bring the dawn and the light and this new age?

Well, Peter calls it the morning star. Verse 19, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. What is this morning star that we're waiting for?

Well, this is not just Peter's poetic side coming out here. This morning star has a history. Listen to this prophecy from the book of Numbers. Numbers 24, 17 says, I see him, but not now.

I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel. This prophecy says that a star will rise, and this star will be a ruler.

That's what the scepter is about. It's a king's staff for ruling. And so this morning star is a king who will one day come to rule and judge. And that will be the dawning of the new era.

[23 : 59] Revelation 22, 16 makes this even clearer. In case anyone wasn't sure who this morning star is, Revelation says, I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.

I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. The rising of the morning star is a symbol for the second coming of Christ, which begins a new age.

Peter's saying, you're in the dark now, but the light is coming. The dawn is coming. The morning star will rise. What are we to do in the meantime?

We need a light. You know, this age where it's like nighttime, it's almost like being lulled to sleep. It's like our mundane existence keeps us in this sort of sleepiness where we're not really aware of these awesome realities.

It's a bit like the Matrix. We've seen the Matrix, where humanity is unknowingly trapped in a simulated reality. And intelligent machines have created this simulation to distract humans from the truth.

[25 : 13] The humans are asleep. And it's a bit like that in this age of darkness where we get lulled into thinking that things are just going to keep on going as they always have. Life, job, hobbies, family.

We forget that Jesus is coming back. It's going to be a judgment day. He's going to be king of the entire world forever. Don't fall asleep.

Don't be so busy doing stuff that we forget where we're headed. What we need to wake us up is a light shining in our faces, keeping us awake.

We need the word of God from the prophets and the apostles. That's why Peter says, pay attention to the prophetic word as to a lamp shining in a dark place.

Until that day when Jesus arrives and morning comes, let's pay attention to God's word. Let's ask this question just one more time.

[26 : 11] How do we know that Jesus is really coming back? Because the transfiguration proves it. The prophets foretold it. So let's pay attention to God's word until he comes.

Let's pray together. Amen. Our Father God, thank you that you spoke through your prophets.

You promised us that Jesus will judge and rule. Thank you that you have confirmed it through the eyewitness testimony of the apostles. Please wake us up out of our sleepiness.

Let us feel the gravity of that certain future event when Jesus returns to judge and to rule. Father, help us to pay attention to your word. Like a lamp in a dark place.

Until Jesus, our morning star, comes again. And the day goes. We pray in his name. Amen.