

The Gospel message we usually preach is “Jesus came and He died to save us from our sins, and therefore we repent of our sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be saved”. But just as important as this, is the message that Jesus is returning.

And this letter of 2nd Peter has ‘the return of Jesus’ as a major theme. He doesn’t teach us a lot about it, rather, reminds us **of** it...

You see, the early church were expecting Jesus to return in their own lifetime. And in **every** generation since then, disciples of Jesus have been anxiously awaiting the coming of Jesus, and expecting it to be “very soon”.

For some people, every world/national/local event, gets them convinced all the more – “Jesus has got to come soon...”

But then others have been hearing people say this for so many generations – they’ve seen so many people (claiming to be prophets of God), claiming it will be by (or at) a certain date, and every one of them have been wrong,, and so for some, the return of Jesus doesn’t even figure into their thinking. They consider it to be “The realm of crackpots”...

And later on in this letter, Peter is going to address this issue ‘quite directly’. But at this point, he’s introducing it.

Alright, so this is the pattern of the letter so far:

- He began by reminding us that by faith, we’re going to participate in eternal glory with Christ.
- The thing that’s made this possible, is that Christ has saved us from our sin;

- We've escaped the corruption of this world, that comes from sinful desire;
- And so we're bound for immortality.

Therefore, we must:

- make every effort to supplement our faith with virtue;
- with excellence of character;
- and with right living;
- faith and works must go together.
- by practicing these qualities (by doing these things – by living righteously – keeping in step with the Spirit) our faith will be fruitful/effective;
- and ¹¹ there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And now today, Peter tells us a **second** reason for righteous living – The second reason is because we know Christ is returning...

When I was a young fella – working on the family farm – still boarding at home, my parents went to NZ for 2 or 3 weeks... And I knew they were coming back. And I even knew the date it would be. And so, I put off all housework; all dishwashing; all kitchen cleaning until the day before they were supposed to come home....

I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but I was a downright grot...

Anyway, I can't remember what happened, but something really urgent came up, and I just had to urgently leave... So, feeling really bad, I wrote mum a note, "Sorry for the mess. I fully intended to clean it up, but this urgent thing has come up and I've had to go... I'm so, so sorry..."

And when Mum & Dad got home, the house was pristine, with my note sitting on the bench, apologising for the mess...

And what had happened, was my brother (Cornerstone), had unbeknown to me, come up to a church camp in QLD (Mt Tambourine), and he, along with the whole Cornerstone community decided they would stay at our house overnight. And they saw the abomination I'd left in the kitchen, and the girls hooked in and cleaned up the abomination I'd left, but they left the note on the bench, just so Mum would know...

And our family still laugh about that...

But I've done a lot of batching since then, and I don't let the house just go to rack-&-ruin because I've learned my lesson...

But sometimes Christians are like that with the return of Jesus... We know Jesus is coming, and yet we let our lives descend into a great big mess... And just like I was feeling rotten and embarrassed, that my Mum was going to see what Michael had done to her beautiful home,, sometimes we live our lives, knowing that we would feel rotten and embarrassed if Jesus should suddenly arrive and ,, oh no, what have I done? Why did I leave it so long???

And so, Peter's quite clear here – I'm going to keep reminding you of these qualities – I'm going to keep reminding you how you should be living your life – In fact, I'm going to write these qualities down, so that even after I'm gone, this letter is going to be a reminder to you from the grave...

He says, "I know you know these qualities". And "You are established in the truth"... ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder... And I'm going to die soon – (Jesus told me that), but for now, ¹⁵ I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

Funny thing with preaching – the temptation ever before a preacher, is to be always looking for something new and exciting to tell their congregation,, (the trouble is, that's how a lot of false teachings come in "That's exciting. I've never heard that before. He must be a great teacher – I'm going to listen to him some more new things... ..")... But sometimes, the best thing a preacher can do, is to remind us of what we already know.

Peter wasn't telling them anything new/novel... He wanted to stir them up by reminding them of what they already knew – that because they've been saved, walk in the ways of Jesus, and remember, Jesus is coming again...

Sometimes we **do** need to be reminded of these things, don't we.

You see, Peter was aware, that over time, disciples of Jesus sometimes become 'less zealous' – sometimes:

- we forget the sin we've been forgiven of;
- we wander from the truth we've been established in;
- we fail to supplement our faith with righteous living...

And so, he would remind them, and remind them again, of these simple basics of the Gospel... And these truths are **extra** important, because we need to remember that Jesus is coming back.

The Gospel that Peter had proclaimed to them, wasn't something that he and the other apostles had made up. They were eye-witnesses of the majesty/glory of Christ.

And at this point, Peter thinks back to a significant moment (what we know as the transfiguration)

Matthew 17:1-13 (ESV) The Transfiguration

17 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here,

one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."
⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." ¹⁰ And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" ¹¹ He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Alright, so that's the time when Peter saw with his own eyes, the glory and majesty of Christ... But what's the significance of it??? The significance, is this is a glimpse of what Jesus is going to be like at His 2nd coming.

V¹⁶ 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.

Alright, so this is a future event, but Peter, James and John had were already eye-witnesses to this coming event.

The “Power” and “Coming” (of Jesus), isn’t a thing of the past. The Greek word Peter uses here, for “Coming”, is παρουσίαν (parousian) . And in the Bible, almost every time the word “parousia” is used, it’s referring to the **second** coming of Jesus – not His first. So, Peter’s telling us, that the transfiguration, was a glimpse of the glory and power that Jesus is going to come in, at His second coming...

Something I’ve been convicted of (from this Bible reading), is we need to be proclaiming the **2nd** coming of Jesus, much more than we do... The first time Jesus came, He came as a saviour and a servant... But we and others, need to be reminded, that when Jesus returns, He will come in glory and power. Anyone who’s expecting Jesus to be a ‘gentle Jesus, meek & mild’, aren’t going to recognise Him.

The image we have of Jesus returning in Power, is He’ll come as the judge of the world who rejected Him.

In Rev 19, He’s depicted as :

- a rider on a white horse;
- His robe dipped in blood;
- crowned with many crowns;

- a sharp sword coming from His mouth, to strike down the nations;
- He will rule them with an iron rod;
- He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty;
- And the flesh of the mighty and the lowly, will be pickings for the birds...

It's not a new thing, for Jesus not to be recognised.

The reason that Jesus wasn't recognised (as the Messiah) by most at His 1st coming, is because the prophets had given images of His 1st coming **and** His 2nd coming, but no one realised that they were 2 separate events. And most of the religious leaders were fixated on the images of the 2nd coming – a mighty conqueror, coming to set them free from their oppressors...

But Jesus came as the suffering servant, and they killed Him. But the 2nd coming, is yet to come.

And so Peter says V¹⁹ **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,**

The Old Testament Messianic prophecies, **and** Jesus' own prophecies (that He spoke of His return), are confirmed by His transfiguration... And we would do well to pay attention to

these. Peter describes them as a lamp shining in a dark place...

A few weeks ago, we touched on the concept of “the now, but the not yet”... We’re saved by the blood of Jesus – we’re going to be with Him in His glory,, but not yet...

“The now”, is we live in this fallen, broken world, which is a dark place to live... But we have a lamp in this dark place... The Scriptures provide light, so we know what’s really going on...

Probably a good example at the moment, is the whole anxiety over this Covid Virus... I keep coming in contact with people who are so fearful...

At the start, there were people dreadfully afraid they were going to catch this virus and die... And I had to have a few serious conversations with people –

- *“Are you a Christian or aren’t you???”*
- *Why are you afraid of dying – you get to be with Jesus...?*
- *Do you believe, or don’t you believe, that God has everything in control???”*

But now, the tables seem to have turned... Those who were afraid of dying are now getting their vaccinations, and they’re not the ones who are filled with fear...

Those who are now overcome with fear, are those who are convinced that it’s all a great conspiracy, and there’s something nasty in these needles that’s going to some-how

harm people... And once again, I've had to have some serious conversations with people – why are you so afraid??? Do you not trust that God has everything in control???

I've read the Bible... and (spoiler alert), Jesus wins...

Personally, I don't believe there is a great conspiracy (Oh, there's no doubt, our politicians are very much enjoying their new-found power and control)... But even if there is a great conspiracy, so what??? The Scriptures tell us not to be afraid of conspiracies¹. As Christians, we have no reason to be afraid of things that people of the world get afraid of. Do you know why? Because we know who's really in control...

In faith, we have no fear. We're not consumed by these things.... The Scriptures are a lamp in a dark world. And these Scriptures cut through the darkness...

The light, revealed in the Scriptures, is Jesus is returning... The religious leaders missed the 1st coming of Jesus, because they were focused on prophecies that were foretelling His 2nd coming... We now know that ...

So, that's "the now". This world is a dark place, but we have the light of God's word, to remind us that Jesus is coming... And then Peter describes "the not yet". until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts

Yes, Jesus is coming in power as righteous Judge, to slay His enemies... But that shouldn't make **us** afraid. This is going to be like the dawning of morning...

And the morning star rises in our hearts. This isn't merely a world event that's just going to happen, and we watch on,, The Parousia of Christ – the 2nd coming of Jesus, happens to us. Because, this is also about **our** resurrection and **our** glorification...

....

It's prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures, and it's been prophesied by the words of Jesus Himself...

These Messianic prophesies, were not made up (by the will of man), and they're not open to our own interpretation...

Later on, Peter's going to talk about how false teachers 'twist' the Scriptures to make them line up with their own ideas... And they'll be judged for that... But true prophecy was never produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And when God speaks, it's not up to us to decide what that means. And it's not up to us to re-interpret what God has said... God's word stands, and it stands unchanged...

I think what Peter's teaching us here, is we can trust the Scriptures, because they've been tested, and confirmed...

That doesn't mean that every person who claimed to be a prophet, was a prophet... Throughout the history of Israel, false prophets tried to mislead those who would listen to them... But they've been weeded out, and the true prophets are the ones who speak in the Scriptures...

But this is what makes a prophet, you see – A prophet speaks only the words that God has given him to say... And this is why we have to be very careful – many who **claim** to be prophets, put forward their own ideas, but they claim it's from God. That's what's called a “false prophet”... And we're going to talk more about false prophets and false teachers next week...

But I just want to finish by saying this:
It's because of false prophets and false teachers, that the way of truth, is blasphemed... (brought into bad repute)...

Do you know what that tells me? Firstly, there **is** a way of truth. And what Peter's been telling us here, is that truth is “Jesus is coming”...

And secondly, If I'm not following the truth / way of truth, I'm giving Jesus a bad rep...

Jesus is returning. Live in all righteousness, as we await the day of glory. And know that He's coming, because it's been

prophesied in the Scriptures, and confirmed in the transfiguration.

Let's Pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

We thank You for the promise of Your return in glory.

Help us to eagerly await this day;

As we read the Scriptures and the prophecies of Your return,

help us to be encouraged by Your lamp in a dark world.

And Lord, as we await that day,

help us to live as Your faithful children,

in all Love and righteousness.

And to bring glory to You.

in Jesus' Name,

Amen.

ⁱ Isaiah 8:11–15 (ESV)

Fear God, Wait for the LORD

¹¹ For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹² “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. ¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you

shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. ¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”