



LESSON SEVEN

God's Divine Government and the Importance of the Prophetic Word

Scripture Reading:

2 Peter 3:13 – 18

- 3:13** But according to His promise we are expecting new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.
- 3:14** Therefore, beloved, since you expect these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace without spot and without blemish;
- 3:15** And count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you,
- 3:16** As also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.
- 3:17** You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, be on your guard lest being carried away by the error of the lawless, you fall from your own steadfastness.
- 3:18** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What are the three basic structures of the miniseries of the three apostles?
2. What does it mean “to be found by the Lord in peace”?
3. What should our attitude be in considering the Lord’s longsuffering towards the believers? How does Peter strengthen his writing?

Section 2:

1. What are the four crucial things related to God’s economy?
2. What is the proof that all the apostles’ writing participated in the same ministry of the New Testament?
3. According to 2 Peter 3:18, what does it mean “to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?”

Section 3:

1. Why do we need the prophetic word and what does it do to us?
2. How do we become stars in this age?
3. How shall we deal with the Word? What does it mean in practical experience?

Section 4:

1. Explain 2 Peter 1:19. What are the two matters covered in this verse?
2. What will be the result if we give heed to prophetic word?
3. How can we prove that the prophetic word is altogether reliable and trustworthy?

----- [SECTION 1] -----

In this message we shall consider 3:13-18. In verse 13 we have the expectation of the new heavens and the new earth filled with God's righteousness; in 14 to 16, the preparation for the coming judgment; and in 17 and 18, the conclusion, where we are told to be on guard and grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord.

NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH

In 3:13 Peter says, "But according to His promise we are expecting new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." The Greek word rendered "dwells" may also be translated "makes its home." Because this Epistle is on the government of God, eventually it tells us that there will be a new universe where righteousness will dwell. This indicates that everything will be altogether under God's government. Nothing will be wrong; nothing will be unjust or unrighteous. Thus, there will be no need for any further governmental judgment of God.

After all the material things are dissolved, God's promise as His everlasting word will still exist for His redeemed people to trust in and stand upon, with the expectation of a new universe. We should not set our hope on the visible elements, but on what the word of God promises as our destiny, that is, the new heavens and a new earth, which have not yet come into our view.

The new heavens and new earth will be the old heavens and old earth renewed and transformed through the burning of God's judging fire, just as the new man is our old man renewed and transformed (Col. 3:9-10; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Righteousness is the main factor based upon which God's governmental judgment is meted out to all creatures in His old creation. Hence, in these two books concerning God's government this matter is stressed repeatedly (1 Pet. 2:23, 24; 3:12, 14; 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:1; 2:5, 7-8, 21; 3:13). The main thing we see in John's writings is God's love expressed in His life; in Paul's writings, God's grace distributed in His dispensation; and in Peter's writings, God's righteousness maintained in His government. God's life, dispensation, and government are the basic structures of the ministry of these three apostles. Life is of love, dispensation is by grace, and government is based upon righteousness. This

righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and earth and it will saturate God's new universe prevailing to maintain it absolutely under God's righteous order, so that there will be no need ever of any further judgment.

DILIGENT TO BE FOUND IN PEACE

In verse 14 Peter goes on to say, "Wherefore, beloved, since you expect these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and without blemish." To be found by the Lord in peace is to be found right in His eyes with both God and man at His coming. Peace is the fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11; Isa. 32:17). Because this book emphasizes righteousness for God's governmental dealing, it charges the believers who are walking in the way of righteousness (2:21) to pursue peace (Heb. 12:14), so that they may be prepared for the Lord's coming with judgment. In 4:14 Peter exhorts us to be found by the Lord in peace "without spot and without blemish." The heretics, who forsake the straight way and follow the way of unrighteousness (2:15), are spots and blemishes among the believers (2:13). But the believers, who are pursuing peace as the fruit of righteousness in God's government, should be without spot and without blemish, like the Lord, who is the Lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:19).

SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION

In order to prepare for the coming judgment, we should not only be found in peace, but we should also be saved from destruction. Concerning this, Peter says in 3:15 and 16: "And count the longsuffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." The mockers count, or consider, the Lord's longsuffering toward the believers as delay, tardiness, or slackness (v. 9). This is their twisting of the Lord's word spoken by the prophets in the Scriptures and the apostles in their teachings. Hence, Peter charges the believers to count the Lord's longsuffering as salvation instead of delay, not twisting the prophets' prophecies nor the apostles' teachings, including Peter's and also Paul's, that they may not be judged unto destruction, as the heretics

will at the Lord's coming. It is by doing this and by being diligent to be found by the Lord in peace that the believers prepare themselves for the Lord's coming with judgment.

The Lord's longsuffering in the delay regarding His promise should be counted as prolonged opportunity for the believers to repent unto salvation. Salvation in 3:15 is not salvation in its initial stage, but salvation in its completing stage. The Lord has delayed His coming with the intention that many of His elect may not miss the topmost portion of His full salvation.

In 3:15 and 16 Peter refers to Paul's writings. Peter was not the only apostle to teach that the Lord's longsuffering should be counted salvation instead of delay, with the confirmation of the prophets' prophecy. Paul as another of the apostles also teaches the same thing in his writings, which are based upon the prophetic word of the Old Testament. Peter refers to this fact to strengthen his writing.

In verse 16 Peter gives a warning not to twist the Scriptures. We should twist neither the writings of the apostle Paul nor the writings of the apostle Peter, for both are part of the Scriptures of the New Testament. Those who twist the Scriptures will suffer destruction.

Since Peter's antidote to inoculate against the heretical teachings of the apostasy is the holy word spoken by the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles, he cannot miss the writings of the apostle Paul, which are the greatest part of the apostles' teachings for constituting the New Testament. In his writing, which is also a part of the apostles' teachings and the constituents of the New Testament, Peter has repeatedly in both his Epistles referred to the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles (1 Pet. 1:9-12; 2 Pet. 1:12-21; 3:2). Now he refers to the apostle Paul in the strongest way, saying that Paul in all his writings speaks some things which are hard to understand, concerning the things of which Peter speaks in his writing, and that to twist Paul's writings is equivalent to twisting the Scriptures as the heretics do, resulting in destruction, that is, in being judged by the Lord at His coming back.

This is a strong warning to both the believers and the heretics in the apostasy.

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PETER'S VIEW OF GOD'S ECONOMY

In 3:16 Peter speaks of "these things." In his two Epistles of only eight chapters Peter has covered the entire economy of God, from eternity past before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:2, 20) to the new heavens and new earth in eternity future (2 Pet. 3:13). He unveils the crucial things related to God's economy, which the prophets prophesied and the apostles preached (1 Pet. 1:10-12), from four sides as follows:

(1) From the side of the Triune God:

God the Father has chosen a people in eternity according to His foreknowledge (1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2:9) and has called them to His glory (1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3). Christ, foreknown by God before the foundation of the world, but manifested in the last times, has redeemed God's chosen people (1 Pet. 1:18-19, 2) by His vicarious death (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18) through His resurrection in life and ascension in power (1 Pet. 1:3; 3:21-22). The Spirit, sent from heaven, has sanctified and purified those whom Christ has redeemed (1 Pet. 1:2, 12, 22; 4:14). (The angels long to look into these things—1 Pet. 1:12.) The Triune God's divine power has provided them with all things relating to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4), guarding them unto full salvation (1 Pet. 1:5). God also disciplines them (1 Pet. 5:6) by some of His varied governmental judgments (1 Pet. 1:17; 2:23; 4:5, 6, 17; 2 Pet. 2:3, 4, 9; 3:7), and He will perfect, establish, strengthen, and ground them by His all grace (1 Pet. 5:10). The Lord is longsuffering toward them that they all may have opportunity to repent unto salvation (2 Pet. 3:9, 15). Then Christ will appear in glory with His full salvation for those who love Him (1 Pet. 1:5, 7-9, 13; 4:13; 5:4).

(2) From the side of the believers:

The believers, as God's possession, have been chosen by God (1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2:9), called by His glory and virtue (1 Pet. 2:9; 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:10), redeemed by Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19), regenerated of God through His living word (1 Pet. 1:3, 23), and saved through the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 3:21). They are now being guarded by the power of God (1 Pet. 1:5), being purified to love one another (1 Pet. 1:22), growing by feeding on the milk of the word (1 Pet. 2:2), developing in life the spiritual virtues (2 Pet. 1:5-8), and being

transformed and built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to serve God (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9). They are God's chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, peculiar people for His private possession to express His virtues (1 Pet. 2:9), being disciplined by His governmental judgment (1 Pet. 1:17; 2:19-21; 3:9, 14, 17; 4:6, 12-19; 5:6, 9), living a holy life in an excellent manner and godliness to glorify Him (1 Pet. 1:15; 2:12; 3:1-2), ministering as good stewards of His varied grace for His glorification through Christ (1 Pet. 4:10-11) (under the elders' exemplary shepherding—1 Pet. 5:1-4), and expecting and hastening the coming of the Lord (1 Pet. 1:13; 2 Pet. 3:12) to be richly supplied with an entrance into the eternal kingdom of the Lord (2 Pet. 1:11). They are expecting further the new heavens and new earth with God's righteousness for their eternity (2 Pet. 3:13), and they are growing continually in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).

(3) From the side of Satan:

Satan is the believers' adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion walking about, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

(4) From the side of the universe:

The fallen angels were condemned for eternal judgment (2 Pet. 2:4); the ancient ungodly world was destroyed by a flood (2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6); the ungodly cities were reduced to ashes (2 Pet. 2:6); the false teachers and heretical mockers in the apostasy and the living mankind will all be judged unto destruction (2 Pet. 2:1, 3, 9-10, 12; 3:3-4, 7; 1 Pet. 4:5); the heavens and the earth will be burned up (2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 11); and all the dead men and the demons will be judged (1 Pet. 4:5). Then the new heavens and the new earth will come as a new universe, in which God's righteousness will dwell for eternity (2 Pet. 3:13).

A COMMENDATION OF PAUL'S WRITINGS

Paul in his writings also speaks "these things" (except the new heavens and the new earth). Hence, Peter refers to Paul's writings to strengthen his writings, especially concerning God's governmental and disciplinary judgment upon the believers. Paul also strongly and

repeatedly emphasizes this matter in his writings (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:5-11; 2:3; 4:1; 6:8; 10:27-31, 39; 12:29; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 4:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). This should be the reason that Peter highly commends Paul's writings.

What beauty and excellency are in this commendation! Although the Corinthians attempted to divide Peter and Paul according to their own divisive preference (1 Cor. 1:11-12), Peter commends Paul, and says that both of them teach the same things, "these things," and that Paul's writings should not be twisted, but be regarded as "the rest of the Scriptures" and receive the same respect as the Old Testament. For Peter to make such a commendation is a great thing, for it was he who was rebuked by Paul to his face regarding the New Testament faith (Gal. 2:11-21). This indicates that Peter was bold in admitting that the early apostles, like John, Paul, and himself, although their style, terminology, utterance, aspects of their views, and presentations of their teachings differed one from another, participated in the same unique ministry, the ministry of the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:8-9; 4:1). Such a ministry ministers to people, as its focus, the all-inclusive Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God, who, after passing through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, dispenses Himself through the redemption of Christ and by the operation of the Holy Spirit to His redeemed people as their unique portion of life, life supply, and everything, for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the full expression, the fullness, of the Triune God, according to the eternal purpose of the Father.

In 3:16 Peter says that the unlearned and unstable twist Paul's writings and also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. This indicates that the mockers (2 Pet. 3:3) and their followers must have twisted the Scriptures and the apostles' teachings.

According to the context, "destruction" in verse 16 refers not to eternal perdition, but to the punishment of the divine governmental discipline.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE

In 3:17 and 18 we have the conclusion of this Epistle. In verse 17 Peter says, "You, therefore, beloved, knowing these things before, be on your guard lest being carried away by the error of the lawless, you fall from your own steadfastness." Here Peter tells us to be on our guard because of the apostasy, the heretical teachings, that may carry us away to destruction by twisting the apostles' writings or the Scriptures. The Greek word rendered "carried away" here is the same word used in Galatians 2:13 concerning Peter, Barnabas, and other Jewish believers. In verse 17 "the lawless" must refer to the false teachers and mockers (2 Pet. 2:1; 3:3) as the early heretics. Peter is concerned lest the saints fall from their own steadfastness. To fall from our steadfastness is to become unstable.

In verse 18 Peter concludes, "But grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen." The word "grow" indicates that what Peter has written in his two Epistles is a matter of life. To grow in grace is to grow by the bountiful supply of eternal life provided by the divine power (1:3-4), and to grow in the knowledge of the Lord is to grow by the realization of what Christ is. This is to grow by the enjoyment of grace and realization of truth (John 1:14, 17).

Grace is the Triune God being life and the life supply to us. We need to grow in this life supply, in this nourishment. Therefore, to grow in grace means to grow in this inward source of the supply of life. At the beginning of this Epistle Peter speaks of grace, and now at the end he charges us to grow in this grace.

Peter also encourages us to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The realization of the knowledge of our Lord equals truth, the reality of all that He is, as in John 1:14 and 17. Peter charges the believers to grow not only in grace but also in this truth.

Peter ends this Epistle with the word, "To Him be the glory both now and unto the day of eternity." The pronoun "Him" refers to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Since such a praise is one that is rendered to God (Rom. 11:36; 16:27), this indicates that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is God.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPHECIES IN THE BIBLE

The Believers Needing to Give Heed to Prophecies

In his Epistles, Peter encourages the believers to give heed to the prophetic word made more firm, that is, to give heed to the prophecies when studying God's word.

As to a Lamp Shining in a Dark Place

Peter likens the word of prophecy in the Scriptures to a lamp shining in a dark place. This indicates that this age is a dark place like a dark night (Rom. 13:12), and all the people of this world are moving and acting in darkness. If the believers do not have the prophecies in the Bible, they too will fall into darkness. Therefore, we need the prophetic word of the Scriptures, as a shining lamp, to convey spiritual light that shines in the darkness (not merely knowledge in letters for our mental apprehension), guiding us to enter into a bright day, even to pass through the dark night until the day of the Lord's appearing dawns. Before the Lord as the sunlight appears, we need this word as light to shine on our footsteps (Psa. 119:105).

Until the Day Dawns and the Morning Star Rises

Peter tells us to give heed to the prophetic word until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts. This word is a metaphor, illustrating a coming time that will be full of light, as a bright day dawning, with the morning star rising, before dawn, in the hearts of the believers who are illuminated and enlightened. If we give heed to the prophecies in the Bible as a shining lamp within us, we will enjoy the morning star rising in our hearts until the spiritual day dawns within us. In the time of apostasy the believers do well to give heed in this matter so that the prophetic word, as a lamp, may shine through the darkness of apostasy until such a day dawns upon them. This will cause and encourage them to earnestly seek the Lord's presence and be watchful so that they will see the Lord as the morning star when He comes in secret (Matt. 24:27; 2 Thes. 2:8).

Hence, this metaphor alludes to the coming age, the age of the kingdom, as a day that will dawn

at the appearing (the coming) of the Lord as the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), whose light will shine and break through the gloom of the dark night of this age. Preceding this, the Lord will appear as the morning star (Rev. 2:28; 22:16) in the darkest hour of the night to those who are watchful and looking for His dear appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). The believers who give heed to the prophecies in the Bible will have Christ rising in their hearts to shine in the darkness of today's apostasy, before His actual appearing as the morning star.

HOW TO BECOME STARS

In the Bible we see how we may not only follow the star but even become one of the stars. There are two ways: first, by the Bible, and second, by the Spirit.

By the Prophetic Word

Second Peter 1:19 gives us the first secret: "We have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." We have the prophetic word, the Bible. However, the prophetic word is not the star; the Bible is not the star. Then what should we do? This verse says that since we have the prophetic word, we need to give heed to it, we need to pay full attention to it, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.

The word used for *star* here can be translated into English as "phosphorous." This star is something as phosphorous, bringing light in the darkness. The darker the situation is, the brighter the phosphorous shines. The Bible should not simply be words in black and white; it should not be dead letters. We should give heed to the words of the Bible until something as phosphorous rises within us—that is, Christ as the morning star.

If we deal with the Word livingly and properly, it surely will turn into the living Christ. This is the turning point—the Word needs to be turned into Christ; the written word needs to be turned into the living word. We can never separate Christ from the living word. We should give heed to the prophetic word until it rises within us as Christ, as the phosphorous, as the day breaking through the darkness.

To have the Bible in our hands is one thing; to give heed to the word until the morning star rises in our heart is another. To have the knowledge of the Bible is one thing, but to have a shining star rising in our spirit is another. To take the way of studying the Bible in a seminary means nothing. What we need today is to take the Word into us, to give heed to the living word until something within rises and shines in our heart. Then we will have the star, and then we will be a star. This is not merely the knowledge about Christ but Christ Himself as the living star.

If there are believers on this earth who love the divine Word, I believe we should be numbered among them. We love the Word, but not in the way of dead letters. We love the Word by giving heed to it until something within is dawning and rising in our heart—not the knowledge, not the written code, but the breaking through of day, the rising of the shining star.

What does this mean in practical experience? Sometimes we may take the Bible, read it, and feel that we receive nothing. Other times, however, when we open our heart and give heed to this prophetic word, something within is shining, rising, dawning, breaking through. While we are pray-reading the verses of the Bible, there is a sense deep within of enlightening, of shining, and this shining creates a love toward the Lord Jesus. We feel that He is so lovable. We could say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You; I do not have words to express how lovely You are!" Many times by this shining we are beside ourselves with love to the Lord Jesus. That is Jesus coming to us as the dawning day, as the morning star rising in our hearts. I am not speaking of something I have learned from others, and I am not boasting; this is my experience. Many times when I was with this holy Word, something has risen within me like the daybreak. Oh, it is wonderful! The situation may not be bright, the surroundings may be full of darkness, but something within is enlightening, shining, filling with glory.

In the days of the magi, the seeing of the star was a miraculous occurrence, but today to see the morning star is only normal and should be our regular experience. Day by day we need to have the morning star rising in our heart. We should not merely read the Bible and not even merely pray-read the Bible; we need to give heed to the prophetic word until the day dawns and the

morning star rises in our heart. We need to go on until we reach this point.

Today, therefore, the star comes from the living word. I am so happy that in this verse we have the word and the morning star together. First, we have the word; second, by giving heed to the prophetic word, we have the morning star rising in our heart. If we will simply go along continually with this inner, rising star, we will consistently be in the Spirit. This is the New Testament service.

By the Spirit

In 2 Peter we have the prophetic word, but in Revelation we have the seven Spirits. Revelation 3:1 says, "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." The hand of Jesus holds not only the seven stars but also the seven Spirits. This means that the seven Spirits are one with the seven stars, and the seven stars are one with the seven Spirits. If we have the living word as the morning star rising within us and we are one with the seven Spirits, eventually we will become the stars. We not only have the star shining within us, but by looking to the star and following in the Spirit, we become the stars.

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TAKING HEED TO THE PROPHETIC WORD

In 1:19-21 Peter goes on to use the prophetic word found in the Old Testament to confirm their testimony. Both the apostles' witness and the prophetic word in the Scriptures are the shining of the truth. This shining is part of the divine provision, the provision God has made by His power so that His elect children may be able to stay away from heresy and apostasy.

In verse 19 Peter continues, "And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." "And" indicates that in addition to the truth of the Lord's transfiguration covered in the preceding verses as the inoculation against superstitious myths, the truth of the prophetic word is used for a more sure confirmation. After speaking of his personal experience of the Lord's glory in His transfiguration, Peter goes on to use the word of

the prophets to confirm his testimony and strengthen it.

Peter indicates that the believers do well to give heed to the prophetic word. This means that they were studying the Old Testament prophecies and giving heed to them.

Peter likens the word of prophecy in the Scripture to a lamp shining in a dark place. This indicates that this age is a dark place in the dark night (Rom. 13:12) and that all the people of this world are moving and acting in darkness. It also indicates that the prophetic word of the Scripture, as the shining lamp to the believers, conveys spiritual light to shine in their darkness (not merely knowledge in letters for mental apprehension) and guides them to enter into a bright day, even to pass through the dark night until the day of the Lord's appearing dawns.

The Greek words rendered "dark place" may also be translated murky place, a place that is squalid, dry, and neglected. This is a metaphor, illustrating the darkness in the apostasy. This age is a dark, murky, squalid place. But the prophetic word is a lamp shining in the darkness.

THE DAY DAWNING AND THE MORNING STAR ARISING

Peter says that we do well to give heed to the prophetic word until the day dawns and the morning star arises in our hearts. This also is a metaphor, illustrating a time coming which will be full of light, as a bright day dawning, with the morning star, before dawn, rising in the hearts of the believers, who are illuminated and enlightened by giving heed to the shining word of the prophecy of Scripture. In the time of apostasy the believers do well to give heed in this matter so that the prophetic word, as a lamp, may shine through the darkness of apostasy until such a day dawns upon them. This will cause and encourage them to seek earnestly the Lord's presence and be watchful that they not miss the Lord in the secret part of His *parousia*, when He comes as a thief (Matt. 24:27; 2 Thes. 2:8). Hence, this metaphor should allude to the coming age, the age of the kingdom, as a day that will dawn at the appearing (the coming) of the Lord (2 Pet. 1:16) as the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), whose light will shine to break through the gloom of the dark night of this age. Preceding this, the Lord will appear as the morning star (Rev. 2:28; 22:16) in the darkest hour of the night to those who are watchful and looking for His dear appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

They have been enlightened by the shining of the prophetic word, which is able to lead them to the dawning day.

It is correct to say that the dawning of the day in 1:19 refers to the time of the Lord's coming back. On that day, the Lord will shine as the Sun of righteousness. The time that is very close to the Lord's appearing may be likened to early morning, at which time the Lord Jesus will be the morning star to His watchful believers. Although all this is true, Peter is saying something even more. Actually, in 1:19 Peter covers two matters at the same time. He is saying that the entire world is a dark place and that this present age is a dark night. If we did not have the prophecies of the Bible, we also would be in darkness, for we would not have a lamp. But the prophetic word is our lamp shining in the darkness. As we give heed to this prophetic word, we receive the shining of the light. Eventually, this light will shine until a spiritual day dawns within us, and a morning star rises in our hearts. Therefore, Peter first is speaking of a spiritual day, a day that dawns within us. He also speaks of a future day, the day of the Lord's coming back.

Our experience confirms the fact that in 1:19 Peter is speaking both of a spiritual day and the day of the Lord's coming. Many times we were in darkness and came to the prophecies in the Bible. As we studied the prophecies, a lamp began to shine within us. Spontaneously we had the sense that no longer were we in the night but in the day, for a spiritual day had dawned within us. We have not only the shining of a lamp, but also the dawning of a day. How pleasant it is for the morning star to rise up in our hearts! Although there may be darkness all around us, within us there is a morning star.

As we have pointed out, the dawning day in 1:19 also refers to a future day when the Lord Jesus will come back as the Sun of righteousness. Before His visible coming, He will be the morning star to those who watch for Him. Therefore, Peter's word in 1:19 applies both to our spiritual situation and to the Lord's coming.

THE PROPHETIC WORD SHINING WITHIN US

If we give heed to the prophecies of the Bible, we shall experience a lamp shining within us, enjoy the morning star rising in our hearts, and have a spiritual day dawning within us. We may remain in this condition until the actual time comes when the Lord Jesus appears as the

morning star and there is the dawning of day with Him as the Sun of righteousness.

First we have the shining of the prophetic word, and then this shining becomes a day dawning within us. Outwardly we live in an age of darkness, but inwardly we are full of light. We may continue to enjoy the morning star and the dawning of a spiritual day until the time the Lord appears as the morning star to the watchful ones and dawns as the Sun of righteousness.

In these verses Peter seems to be saying, "Brothers, as Jewish believers you have much knowledge of the prophecies in the Old Testament, and you have heard our testimony concerning the Lord's coming. Now some heretics are trying to tell you that this is a superstition, that it is a tale, myth, or legend. Don't listen to them, and don't accept heretical teachings. You have our testimony, and you have the prophetic word shining within you. This prophetic word should shine within you until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

THE PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE NOT OF ONE'S OWN INTERPRETATION

In verse 20 Peter continues, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation." Here "one's" refers to the prophet who spoke the prophecy or the writer who wrote the prophecy. Literally, the Greek word for "interpretation" means loosening, untying; hence, disclosure, exposition, solution. One's own interpretation means the prophet's or writer's own exposition or solution, which is not inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. Peter's thought here is that no prophecy of Scripture is of the prophet's or writer's own concept, idea, or understanding; that no prophecy comes from that source, the source of man; that no prophecy originates from the private and personal thought of any prophet or writer. This is confirmed and explained by the following verse.

BORNE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Verse 21 says, "For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit." "For" gives the explanation of the preceding verse. No prophecy of Scripture is of the prophet's or writer's solution, for no prophecy was ever borne or carried along by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word translated “borne” also means carried along. The same word is used in verses 17 and 18. No prophecy was ever carried along by the will of man. Man’s will, desire, and wish, with his thought and solution, are not the source from which any prophecy came. The source is God, by whose Holy Spirit men were carried along, as a ship by the wind, to speak out the will, desire, and wish of God.

Because the prophets were carried along by the Holy Spirit, what they uttered was not of their own interpretation or will. On the contrary, what they spoke was the will of God, the concept of God uttered by a prophet who was carried along by the Holy Spirit.

A RELIABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY WORD

Verses 20 and 21 prove that the prophetic word is altogether reliable and trustworthy. The prophecy in the Scriptures did not come from man’s opinion. This prophecy is God’s word, God’s speaking. For this reason, we should believe whatever is prophesied in the Old Testament. Peter seems to be saying here, “The prophecy in the Bible is genuinely of God. Therefore, it is trustworthy. Do not listen to the heretical teachings of the apostates, of those who have deviated from the track of divine truth. Instead, you should give heed to the prophecies of the Old Testament and also hold to our testimony.”

As we shall see, in 2:1 Peter says, “But there arose also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” Here Peter says that there were false prophets among the people in times past and that in the future there will be false teachers among the believers. These false teachers will bring in destructive heresies. Peter’s word at the end of chapter one leads him to go on to speak of apostasy in chapter two. Peter’s burden was to inoculate the believers against this apostasy.