

4. Why is it so easy to be distracted from our heavenly goal?

5. Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-34. Where are you storing treasure?

3

2 Peter 1:12-21

The importance of being right

Sometimes, there is no substitute for being right.

The surgeon has to be certain that the correct blood vessel is clamped before cutting with the scalpel. The engineer must have done the correct calculations for the bridge to carry the traffic load. The accountant has to be certain that the books are accurate in order to have the money to pay the expenses. The skydiver has to know the parachute is folded correctly and will open smoothly.

There are some things in life where you just have to be sure, because the consequences of being wrong are so serious. Christianity is like that. Strangely enough the question "Who is Jesus?" is one many people never bother with, but it's a question which requires careful and clear thinking. It's one which we have to get right.

We discovered in Study 2 that knowledge of Jesus gives us everything we need for life and godliness. It equips a person to negotiate life wisely. It's through a knowledge of Jesus that we participate in the divine nature as God's own Spirit resides in us, changing us and leading us to become more like Jesus.

Such knowledge is no small thing and so it's critical that we gain a *correct* knowledge of Jesus. A wrong knowledge will leave you up an eternal river without a paddle.

In this next section of his letter, Peter explains how we can have confidence that our knowledge of Jesus is right.



Investigate

Read 2 Peter 1:12-18

1. How can you tell that Peter considers knowledge of Jesus to be an important thing?
2. How do we know that Peter did not “follow cleverly invented stories”?
3. The incident that Peter is referring to in verses 17-18 is recorded in Mark 9:2-8. Read it now. Why do you think this made such an impression on Peter?
4. Read Luke 1:1-4. What intentions do Luke and Peter have in common?

The testimony of eyewitnesses

“I saw it with my own eyes.”

There is nothing quite like eyewitness testimony to bring you in close to an event. There were eyewitnesses who met Jesus, and Peter was one of them.

Peter saw and heard Jesus—God’s Son in the flesh. So important is that knowledge that Peter wanted to spend the rest of his life telling people about it.

We, also, should feel the force of this argument. Jesus is not just a nice character in a nice story. He is not in the same category as Mother Goose or Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer. Jesus is an historical person whom eyewitnesses wrote about. This reality gives us a solid foundation for trusting in him.



Investigate

Read 2 Peter 1:19-21

1. What is the meaning of verse 19? (Rev 22:16 may help.)
2. What further reason does Peter give in these verses for having confidence in our knowledge of Jesus?
3. How does Peter’s understanding of the nature of Scripture compare with Paul’s from 2 Timothy 3:14-17?

The testimony of the prophets

We can be certain of our knowledge of Jesus not only because it comes from eyewitnesses, but also because of the testimony of the Old Testament prophets who spoke from God. Prophet after prophet looked forward to the day when God would visit this earth. These prophets were spread over hundreds of years of history with some of them being totally unaware of what the others were saying or had said.

Peter’s point is that it’s no coincidence that these diverse prophets all predicted the same thing and that Jesus came and perfectly fulfilled all the things they had been talking about. It’s no coincidence that it happened that way, because the Old Testament is God himself telling us about Jesus.

This should give us great confidence in our knowledge of Jesus. It’s a knowledge that comes from God himself, not from people who cooked up clever stories.

Being a confident, clear-minded Christian

We have discovered in our studies so far that Peter is writing to encourage his readers to be clear-minded about what is important and what is not. In this respect, Peter has stressed that the clear-thinking Christian understands the importance of a knowledge of Jesus Christ (1:3). More than that, Peter says the clear-thinking Christian can also be confident in his or her knowledge of Jesus because it comes from eyewitnesses and from God himself speaking through the prophets.

This is a powerful thought.

We live in a world that doesn't believe in capital "T" Truth. We live in an age in which nothing is absolute—truth is what happens to suit you. The apostle Peter's teaching lifts the mist of this sort of hazy thinking to show that the Christian faith is founded on clear facts, not fairy stories.

Christianity is not people thinking about God. It is God revealing himself to eyewitnesses. That is surely something to excite us and fill us with a clear and certain belief in Jesus Christ.



Think it through

1. Think about the times you have doubted Christianity. What has been causing these doubts? How can 2 Peter 1:16-21 help you at these times?
2. Are there other things Peter doesn't mention which you feel have led you to have confidence in your knowledge of Jesus?

3. Peter has a very high opinion of Scripture. Do you share his opinion, especially in regard to the Old Testament? How might this show in your lifestyle?

4

2 Peter 2:1-22

The surprising virtue of intolerance

"I just can't believe this sort of thing is in the Bible."

"It's so harsh, so narrow-minded, so intolerant!"

"How on earth could anyone write this and claim to be Christian. Jesus would never say these sorts of things."

These are some of the reactions people have to 2 Peter 2. It is certainly not the part of the Bible most likely to appear on a poster with alpine scenes.

2 Peter 2 concerns a situation so disastrous that some straight talking is required, irrespective of who it upsets or offends or embarrasses. This chapter concerns such a disaster that it is impossible to remain calm about it.

The disaster is that certain false teachers are spreading lies about Jesus. That makes Peter angry. Peter is passionate when false teachers peddle a false gospel about Jesus, because he knows what is at stake. People's eternal destinies are being played around with here.

Investigate

Read 2 Peter 2:1-3

1. What can you discover about the content of the heresies being promoted by the false teachers of Peter's day?

