

Eyewitnesses
(2 Peter 1:16-18)

Through the centuries the Bible has had many formidable critics, and scholars agree that the attacks on the Bible reached a watershed moment during the time of the Enlightenment.

“The Enlightenment attitude of mind was complex and internally varied, but it can be characterized roughly as a dedication of human reason, science, and education as the best means of building a stable society for free men on earth. This meant that the Enlightenment was inherently suspicious of religion, hostile to tradition, and resentful of any authority based on custom or faith alone.

Ultimately the Enlightenment was nothing if not secular in its orientation; it offered the first program in the history of mankind for the construction of a human community out of natural materials alone.”

To help pave the way for this new approach to life came the philosophers of 1588 through 1831. And it was through the philosophies of the Enlightenment that gave birth to liberal theology. However, there were many great minds – that is, many great conservative, orthodox, evangelical scholars that stood firm on the Word of God and would not back down.

These orthodox scholars taught and defended the Word of God. In fact, they taught that the Bible could be trusted. The Bible was studied; and the Bible was taken as the final authority with regard to those matters on which it spoke or made affirmations. They also believed that God had not revealed everything. That is, the Bible did not expressly contain all the truth that could be known. But what the Bible did teach was believed to be completely trustworthy.

They also spoke very highly of, and were very adamant about, truth! In fact, their position they stated over and over: “Truth in any other area would not contradict biblical truth. Starting from Scripture, one could find the true knowledge of reality.”

In our text today, Peter was absolutely convinced of the truth he taught because he had personally experienced it – he was an “eyewitness.” Now Peter was not the only eyewitness of Christ’s “majesty,” but there were others just as convinced as Peter. And Peter used the pronoun “we” to identify the others.

When Peter spoke of “the power and coming” of the Lord Jesus Christ, he did not follow “cunningly devised fables” to defend his position – he didn’t use subtly concocted ideas or deceit. He didn’t need to because he and the others were “eyewitnesses” to the fact.

Now Peter in this context is not defending the deity of Christ, but he is defending the Second Coming of Christ. Peter used the word “coming” to defend his position; and according to the Greek scholar W. E. Vine, the Greek word for coming in verse 16 means “appearing,” or “arrival.” The term, whenever used in the New Testament of Jesus Christ, “always refers to His return.”

Peter was an eyewitness to the “majesty” of Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9). And when Peter connected the phrase “power and coming” with the appearance “of our Lord Jesus Christ,” it is a sure indicator that he referred to Christ Second Coming. And eyewitnesses can speak with authority, and Peter spoke with authority. You can rely upon his word.

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