

Lessons From the Sacred Mountain

(2 Peter 1:16-21)

- These inspired words were written by Simon Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ.
- Every time the twelve Apostles are listed, Peter is mentioned first.
- Peter was one of the first men to become a disciple of Jesus (John 1:40-42.)
- Peter witnessed all of the miracles of Jesus (John 20:30; 21:25; Acts 1:21-22.)
- One miracle, however, seemed more significant to Peter than all the others.
- This miracle convinced Peter that Christianity was true.
- This miracle happened on the sacred mountain.
- We are to study the Scriptures until the truth dawns on us.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE MOUNTAIN?

- This story is found three times in the Bible: (Matt. 17:1-13; Mk. 9:2-13; Lk. 9:28-36.)
- Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a high mountain to pray.
- As Jesus was praying, He was “transfigured.”
- The Bible word for “transfigured” is “metamorphosis.”
- This is the word used to describe a caterpillar becoming a butterfly.
- This particular word is only found four times in the Bible:
 - Two times it refers to a change in Jesus (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2.)
 - Two times it refers to a change in us (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 3:18.)
- The face of Jesus shone like the sun and His clothes were white as the light.
- Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke of the decease of Jesus (Lk. 9:31.)
- Peter wanted to build three tabernacles: one each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.
- The voice of God spoke from heaven telling Peter to listen to Jesus.
- Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone about this vision until after His resurrection.

THE CHANGE IN PETER

- When Peter was born, he was named Simon, the son of John.
- Jesus gave Simon a new name, Peter, which means “stone” (John 1:42.)
- Originally, Peter was vacillating and unstable.
- He promised to lay down his life for Jesus and then denied Him three times (Jn. 13:37-38.)
- God, however, was going to change Peter.
- Just as Jesus went through a transfiguration, Peter would also be transfigured.
- He would no longer be vacillating and unstable, he would be like a stone.
- He would be the first to preach the Gospel to the Jews (Acts 2:)
- He would be the first to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10.)
- He would be an outstanding leader in the church.
- He would ultimately glorify God by dying as a martyr (Jn. 21:18-19.)

NEW NAMES

- Many people in the Bible received new names that signified a change in their lives.
- Abram (exalted father) - Abraham (father of multitudes) Gen. 17:5)
- Sarai (mistress) - Sarah (princess) Gen. 17:15)
- Jacob (heel catcher) - Israel (prince of God) Gen. 32:28

- Israel would no longer be “forsaken and desolate” but “Hephzibah and Beulah” (Is. 62:4.)
- God promised to call His people by a new name (Is. 62:2.)
- God predicted a new relationship - husband and not master (Hos. 2:16.)
- Jesus spoke of a new relationship - not servants but friends (John 15:15.)
- Those who overcome will be given a new name (Rev. 2:17; 3:12.)
- Radical change is an integral part of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:7-13.)

LEARNING FROM CREATION

- The heavens declare of the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork (Ps. 19:1)
- God’s divine nature can be understood by what He has made (Rom. 1:20.)
- Job said we could learn from animals, birds, fish, and every creature (Job 12:7-10.)
- A metamorphosis in nature involves a radical change from one form to another.
- The caterpillar crawls and destroys.
- The butterfly flies and does not destroy.
- The monarch butterfly migrates each year from Canada to Mexico.
- A caterpillar has neither the desire or the ability to migrate.
- God gives the butterfly both desire and the ability to migrate.
- Metamorphosis is like conversion.
- Christ brings a radical change in those who receive Him as Lord.
- Christ gives believers both the desire and the ability to serve Him (Phil. 2:13.)

GUIDANCE FROM GOD IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

- In Old Testament times God guided His people with a pillar of smoke by day, and a pillar of fire at night (Ex. 13:21; 40:34-38; Nu. 9:15-22, etc.)
- As they travelled, the Ark of the Covenant went first, about 2,000 cubits ahead of the nation (Josh. 3:4.)
- Jesus went before His disciples and they followed Him (Jn. 1:35-43, etc.)
- In the four Gospel, the words “follow Me” are found 77 times.
- The only time Jesus told anyone to follow someone else was in Mk. 14:13. Two of His disciples were to follow a man carrying a pitcher of water.
- In one way, it was easy to follow Jesus. When Jesus walked, you walked. When Jesus stopped you stopped.
- In another sense it was hard to follow Jesus. Those who followed Him had to deny themselves and their own plans (Matt. 16:24-26, etc.)

GUIDANCE FROM GOD IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

- Jesus told His disciples that He was going where they could not follow (Jn. 13:36.)
- He was not going to abandon them, however, or leave them like orphans (Jn. 14:16-18.)
- Jesus and the Father would make their abode within us (John 14:23)
- This would be a new concept in guidance. God would guide us from within.
- Today, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and God’s covenant is in our heart and mind (I Cor. 6:19; Heb. 8:7-13.)
- Conversion is like a metamorphosis. God guides the butterfly by giving it a new mind and new abilities. God guides the Christian in the same way.
- Millions of animals, birds, and fish migrate great distances without a leader or a map. God guides them from within. If God can guide these inferior creatures from within, surely He

- can guide us from within too.
- The Scriptures teach that the children of God are led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14.)

GUIDANCE FROM THE BIBLE IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

- The Gospel of Luke tells what Jesus began to do and teach while in His earthly body. The book of Acts tells what Jesus continues to do and teach by means of His Spirit (Acts 1:1)
- The words of Jesus were a primary source of guidance for the Apostles. The Holy Spirit was to call to their remembrance all that Jesus had said unto them (Jn. 14:26.)
- They were also guided by the Scriptures. The Scriptures are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105.)
- All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16.)
- Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. (Matt. 4:4.)
- The Apostles were diligent students of the Word of God and they were guided by the Old Testament Scriptures and the words of Jesus on many occasions. Here are a few examples:
 - Acts 1:2 - Matt. 28:19
 - Acts 1:4 - Lk. 24:49
 - Acts 1:5 - Matt. 3:11
 - Acts 1:16 - Ps. 41:9
 - Acts 1:20 - Ps. 69:25
 - Acts 2:16-21 - Joel 2:28-30, Zech. 12:10
 - Acts 2:25 - Ps. 16:8
 - Acts 2:30 - II Sam. 7:12-13, Ps. 132:11
 - Acts 2:33 - Jn. 14:26
 - Acts 2:34 - Ps. 110:1
 - Acts 3:18 - Is. 50:6
 - Acts 3:22 - Deut. 18:15
 - Acts 3:25 - Gen. 12:3
 - Etc.

CIRCUMSTANCES

God also guided His people in the book of Acts by circumstances. We must not think of history as random occurrences happening by accident. The Scriptures teach that God "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11.) No matter what happens: **"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28.)** As in the story of Job, nothing can happen to the Christian without special permission from God.

Consider:

- A man asking alms occasioned a healing (3:1ff.)
- The healing brought about a sermon
- The sermon brought persecution
- Persecution led to the death of Stephen (7:59-60.)

- Persecution scattered the church (8:1)
- They that were scattered went everywhere preaching the word (8:4.)
- Persecution caused the unconverted Saul to go to Damascus (Acts 9:2.)
- Persecution caused the converted Saul to leave Damascus (9:23-25.)
- Persecution caused him to leave Jerusalem (9:29-30.)
- A famine set the stage to unite Jews and Gentiles (11:28-30.)
- Persecution drove Paul from Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (14:)
- An earthquake resulted in converting a jailer (16:25-34.)
- Etc.

GUIDANCE BY ANGELS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

- Angels ministered to Jesus on various occasions during His ministry (Matt. 4:11; 26:53; 28:2; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 2:9-13; Lk. 22:43; etc.)
- An angel liberated the Apostles from prison and directed them to speak in the temple (Acts 5:19 - 20.)
- An angel directed Moses (Acts 7:30-38.)
- An angel directed Philip to a deserted road (Acts 8:26.)
- An angel directed Cornelius to send for Peter (Acts 10:1-7.)
- An angel liberated Peter from prison (Acts 12:5-11.)
- An angel smote Herod (Acts 12:23.)
- An angel gave encouragement to Paul in a storm (Acts 27:23.)
- Angels are ministering spirits who are sent forth to minister on our behalf (Heb. 1:14.)

PROPHETS

The Bible has a great deal to say about prophets. Prophets did not always predict the future, but they did speak the message of God. The early church was not only guided by the inspired message of the Old Testament prophets, but by contemporary prophets as well. The church was built upon a "foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20.) Paul wrote that God had "set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets (I Cor. 12:28.) He also wrote that the Lord gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministering (Eph. 4:11.)

Here are a few references to prophets in the book of Acts:

- Joel predicted that in the latter days that sons and daughters would prophesy (Acts 2:17.)
- Acts 11:27-30 - Prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, signified by the Spirit that there would be a famine throughout all the world. Based on this information, the disciples determined to send relief to the brethren in Judea.
 - Acts 13:1-4 - Five prophets and teachers are named in the church at Antioch. While these men fasted and prayed, the Holy Spirit said to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work God had called them to.
 - Acts 13:6 - a sorcerer, named Bar-Jesus, is called a false prophet.
 - Acts 15:32 - Judas and Silas, being prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.
 - Acts 16:1-3 - Paul selected Timothy to be his companion in travel. I Tim. 1:18 reveals that Timothy was selected for this honor by of prophetic utterance.

- Acts 19:6 - Paul laid hands on some disciples and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.
- Acts 20:23 - The Holy Spirit testified in every city that bonds and afflictions were waiting on Paul.
- Acts 21:7 - Philip, the evangelist, had four virgin daughters which did prophesy.
- Acts 21:10-14 - Agabus, the prophet, bound his hands and feet with Paul's girdle and predicted that Paul would be thus bound in Jerusalem.

VISIONS

- Acts 2:17 - Joel predicted that "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."
- Acts 9:1-6 - Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus. He commanded him to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do.
- Acts 9:10-21 - The Lord appeared to Ananias in a vision. He instructed him to to a street called Straight and heal Saul of his blindness.
- Acts 10:3 - Cornelius received a vision that told him to send for Peter, who would tell him what to do.
- Acts 10:9-18 - The Lord gave Peter a vision of many animals, reptiles, and birds that he was supposed to eat.
- Acts 10:19 - While Peter thought on the vision the Spirit told him that three men were seeking for him. He was to go with them, nothing doubting, for God had sent them.
- Acts 11:5 - Paul described his vision to those who were of the circumcision.
- Acts 12:9 - When Peter was delivered from prison by an angel, he initially thought it was a vision.
- Acts 16:9-10 - After the Holy Spirit would not let Paul preach in Asia, or Bithynia, he came to Troas. Here he received a vision of a man of Macedonia asking for his help. He reflected on the vision and concluded that God was calling him to preach the Gospel in Macedonia.
- Acts 18:9 - The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and said: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."
- Acts 26:19 - Paul told Agrippa that he was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

THIS LIST IS NOT COMPLETE.

God is All Powerful. He is the Sovereign of the universe. He can guide us any way He wants to.

IN THE EPISTLES

- The Apostles not only depended upon guidance from God, they taught their converts to do the same. Jesus taught them: "**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me**" (John 10:27.) At the same time He promised: "**A stranger they will not follow**" (vs. 5.) As Jesus commanded in the Gr. Commission, they continued to teach their disciples what He had taught them.
- Paul wrote to the Romans: "**For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God**" (Rom. 8:14.) This guidance was not just for the Apostles, but for all of God's children.

- To the Corinthians: **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually judged" (I Cor. 2:14.)**
- To the Philippians: **"If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Phi. 3:15.)** Apparently, God would help the Philippians with some sort of special revelation and understanding.
- To the Colossians: **"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15.)** The word "rule" is "brabeuo" which means to act as an umpire. It seems that when a child of God is doing something God does not want them to do, God takes away their peace.
- To the Thessalonians: **"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13.)** Somehow, God's word somehow "works" in the believer.
- While the Holy Spirit has gifted some as teachers, God teaches some things to His children directly: **"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (I Thess. 4:9.)**
- Guidance can come from the Scriptures when the word of God has "free course" in our lives: **"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you" (II Thess. 3:1.)**
- John wrote: **"But ye have an unction from the Holy one, and ye know all things" (I John 2:20).** **"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things . . ." (I John 2:27).**

THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH

- The Kingdom of God does not come with observation. It is within us (Lk. 17:20-21). You have to be "born again" in order to see it (John 3:3).
- The Greek noun "poema" (the basis of our English word "poem") occurs but two times in the Scriptures. It is used in Rom. 1:20 to refer to the physical universe which God created. It is used in Eph. 2:10 to refer to the spiritual universe which God created.
- God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace (I Cor. 14:33). The physical creation is a "universe" and not a "multiverse". Our universe reflects harmony and design. It is like a poem. The spiritual workmanship of God also reflects harmony and design. It is also like a poem.
- Unregenerate man is in rebellion against God. His **"heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).** His conduct is predictable. Moses observed that Israel rebelled during his life, and would be worse after his death (Deut. 31:27). He was right.
- Regenerate man is not rebellious. Ezekiel predicted: **"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ez. 36:26-27).**
- Note that the letters to Christians are filled with optimism that: **"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).** See also I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22; I Thess. 3:13; 5:9; 5:23-24; II Thess. 3:3-4; Gal 5:10; Phil. 3:3; etc.
- Even though regenerate man struggles with the remnant of his sinful nature (Rom. 7) the outcome is predictable so that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). He that is within us is greater than he that is in the world.

THE NECESSITY OF DILIGENCE

- The Scriptures admonish us to walk "circumspectly". This literally means "like an acrobat". Lazy and slothful people are in danger of falling.
- Other Scriptural illustrations and analogies emphasize the need for diligence. For example: We are like athletes, soldiers, pilgrims, stewards, sheep in the midst of wolves, etc.
- We need to be diligent to test and confirm whatever guidance we receive for there are many false prophets which have gone out into the world. The devil is a deceiver who transforms himself into an angel of light.
- We must be careful to maintain a conscience which is sensitive to His leading. Anything which we cannot do with confidence, we cannot do, for: **"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).**
- The use of our spiritual faculties or "senses," will help us develop the ability to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14.)
- We are not to be like the horse and the mule which have no understanding, but we are to be so sensitive to the leading of God that He can guide us with His eye (Ps. 32:8.)

WHAT THE FATHER IS DOING

- Jesus said: **"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19.)** Jesus did not have His own agenda, He came to do the will of God. His knowledge of what God was doing, enabled Him to participate in it.
- God is doing some great things today. We have witnessed the collapse of atheistic communism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. These countries are so open to the Gospel that Bibles and preachers are even welcome in their public schools.
- Revival has also broken out in China. Some have estimated that there may be more evangelical Christians in China than in any other country on earth.
- God is also opening other great doors of evangelism and opportunity all over the world.
- This is not a time to establish our own program and agenda. It is a time to prayerfully seek guidance from God. The apostles toiled all night long and caught no fish. With a little guidance they had great success.

WHAT ABOUT HIM?

- When Jesus told Peter how he was going to die, Peter beckoned to John and said: **"Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John 21:21)** Jesus told Peter that it was none of his business. Each of us is only responsible for following the leading of God in our own lives.
- Scripture warns us about measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves (II Cor. 10:12.) What someone else does, or does not do, is not our primary concern. To their own master they will stand or fall. Our primary responsibility is to discover and follow the leading of God in our own lives.
- It is a common thing for Christians to imitate each other. This is especially true of young preachers emulating the lives of older preachers who are considered to be successful. While God "may" be leading in such an endeavor, it is important to remember that he may be a hand in the Body and you may be a foot. Regardless of what anyone else does, or does not do, we need to follow the leading of God in our own lives.

- It is altogether possible that God has sent us some gifted teacher, or "angel unaware" to change the direction of our lives. When we do change, however, it is important that we do so to please God and not men. If we try to please men we cannot be servants of Christ (Gal. 1:10.)

- Jeremiah said: **"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23.)** Solomon said: **"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all of thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6.)**

MAY GOD GRANT YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY HIS WORD LIKE A LIGHT SHINING IN A DARK PLACE UNTIL THE DAY DAWNS AND THE DAY STAR ARISES IN YOUR HEARTS.