

## "You are There"

When I was a young child I use to love to watch at TV show **PHOTO 1** called "You are There" by Walter Cronkite. It is a show where they take you back to an historical moment and as you learn, Walter would tell you...you are there. I loved that show. I loved any show, any movie that took you back in time to another era. I love learning about history.

Several years ago, I got to meet and speak to a woman who had survived Auschwitz. **PHOTO 2** She had been a young girl at the time, but her memory and her story were spellbinding. As she described what happened to her and her family, I kept watching her hands....thinking...wow those hands were actually at Auschwitz. Those eyes saw what happened.....this woman was really there. She showed me the tattoo that they placed on her arm....I began thinking about how scary getting a tatto must have been for a young girl...it is still a mark on her from that horrible time in her life.

She was in her nineties...but her memory and recall were spot on. I had been to the Memorial in Jerusalem...seen all the pictures....examined every exhibit...learned all that I could learn...but she was there.

You may know that I am fascinated by History. I can remember sitting by the fireplace with my Granddad **PHOTO 3** as he would tell me stories of what life was like In southern Arkansas during the great depression. It was like living with the Waltons. He could lean back....gaze off into the past....and keep an energetic 6 year old mesmerized with images of a world gone by.

When I was in Medical School **PHOTO 4** I drove one of my professors crazy because he was the trauma doctor at Parkland the day Kennedy was shot and I had to know everything. I have been known to sit on the grassy knoll and wonder or walk down the streets near my home where Oswald was found in the Texas Theatre....a place I went as a child often.

One of my favorite memories about my Dad was an afternoon we spent together the last time I saw him....his mind was sharp and he told me all about our family history...telling me in detail how he had researched the Arkansas Burns family back to pre Civil War times.

I love that. I spent two hours this week sititng with a retired OB/GYN Doctor who was well into his 90's and he was a black physician. I knew what that must have meant for him. Many of the years he spent in practice were not the best years for a black man. But once again, I find myself mesmerized as they gaze and drift off into the mental movies of their past and recall the details of a world I would not otherwise know.

My favorite movie of all is a movie called "Trip to Bountiful" **PHOTO 5** It is about a older woman who just wants to go to her childhood home and experience it again before she dies. I love that.

Geraldine Page won an Academy Award for best actress in this movie in 1985. It was of course filmed in and around Dallas. But that idea of going home....reconnecting to earlier days...I just love that.

What I love about these moments is to see their eyes. As they talk they drift off with their eyes....I always think...Man I wish I could replay the moment that they are seeing in their head.

As they use words...their mind is replaying...going back to moments long past....

The last time I was home in Dallas, I spent 7 hours in a car just driving around to places I remembered as a child. I went by myself because otherwise it would be torture for the person with me.

As I went from place to place, memory to memory, more and more memories and emotions began to flood me.

It is amazing when you put yourself in the moments of your past how you begin to experience it in some way all over again, things that you have forgotten come to mind....one thought introducing the next...the emotions return...good and bad...sometimes the past can be triggered by a song....or a smell...or a sound...I think one of the greatest gifts God gave us was our memories.

Tammy will tell you that I could sit on a Civil War battlefield **PHOTO 6** an picture in my mind what happened....it will seem like 5 minutes to me but it is actually hours of time.

I have an incredible insatiable appetite for history...and that is why I think I love studying the Bible so much. Why I love going to the Holy Land and why I love bringing historical context to those learning about Jesus

So imagine how amped up I get when history turns to the thought of the Apostles...**PHOTO 7** .telling their eyewitness story....

And that is where we find ourselves with the Apostle Peter. He is an older man. But his mind is crystal clear and he is an eye witness to the greatest moments ever.

I wonder what that must have been like. Peter was there...Those feet walked on water....Think about all that his eyes saw...all the moments with Jesus that he had stored in his mind.

Can you imagine listening to Peter? He was there!

The closest experience you can have to the past, is to experience it through those who are eyewitnesses. When I get to heaven, I am going to be a huge pest. I want to hear everyone tell me everything. But until then, it is the account of an eyewitness that brings the most credibility

**2 Peter 1:12–15 (ESV) 12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.**

The tone here from Peter is one of a pastor's heart. Even though he is facing his own death, his concern is for the well being of those who will be left behind. He speaks of his departure as almost an aside.

Peter is going to spend a good part of this last letter to essentially tell everyone, "Don't forget what you have been taught"? Seems a bit odd. But the false teachers have been effective at leading some astray. Peter has a genuine concern that they could become distracted from sound doctrine and take the bait...ending up in endless controversies and supposedly enlightened discussions.

Interesting that Peter uses the specific words...firmly established to describe their faith. Those words have specific memories for Peter. Those are the exact words Jesus used to warn Peter.

**Luke 22:32 (ESV) 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."**

That your faith may not fail....that your faith will be firmly established when the temptation comes.

Peter wants to remind them of these qualities. To remind them of all He has been teaching them...their rescue, their lifeline...their steps of spiritual growth. They have been given the truth...a truth that they now have. And since they have that truth...Peter wants to remind them.

This is a very common Jewish way of learning. You are reminded of something.....then invited to spend some time in that memory to refresh the memory and the emotions...and then establish a way to remember these things.

So Peter says they must be reminded, their memories refreshed, and have a means to remember these foundational truths of the faith.

In the history of Peter's covenant people, God made use of aids to their memory in confirming and preserving their faith

God designated the rainbow as a sign of his pledge never again to judge the earth with such a flood as Noah's generation suffered. Every time they saw a rainbow they would be reminded that God remembers his promise

The Passover reminded the Israelites of God's saving power, being prescribed "so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt"

The weekly Sabbath served as a reminder as well.

Deuteronomy 5:13–15 (ESV) 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, ... 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper for our continual nourishment, commanding that we observe it "in remembrance of him"

So Peter tells them...You have been given the truth...You must remember the truth.....Why?

Peter moves to the issue at hand. False teachers have come to the church and they are discrediting Peter and the other Apostle's authority. They are challenging their reports of Jesus and particularly the claim of His Second Coming.

These false teachers are attacking the very foundation of the Church of Jesus. Remember that Jesus is the Cornerstone and the Apostles develop the foundation of truth. They are the eyewitnesses...the Apostles and Prophets are the ones who establish and guard the truth.

Gnostics are in the churches attempting to literally bring down the foundation of the global church of Jesus. If they can discredit Peter and others, they can destroy the church at its very core.

2 Peter 1:16 (ESV) 16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Peter says, we did not follow cleverly devised myths...obviously the false teachers in the church have been making the claim that Peter and the Apostles have made up stories about Jesus. Satan is attacking the foundation of the church...trying to convince people that the truths they have been taught are actually myths.

We see this argument today....many claim that the Bible...the Holy Scriptures...are nothing more than a collection of fables...made up stores by people who were naive.

Not only do many say this today, but this lie was leveled at the prophets as well...

Ezekiel 20:49 (ESV) 49 Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! They are saying of me, 'Is he not a maker of parables?' "

The Gnostics said Peter had come up with cleverly devised myths to make himself the leader of this church movement. They argue that Peter is using the fear of sin and punishment to keep himself in power. They state that he is keeping them from the special knowledge that they really need to be saved.

Peter specifically mentions their teaching of the power and coming of Jesus Christ. His Second Coming...or as we studied in the Apostle's Creed a few weeks ago...Jesus returning to judge the living and the dead.

The return of Jesus was particularly problematic for gnostics....for many reasons.

To the Gnostics everything created is bad or evil and everything in the Spiritual realm is holy. So they believe that Jesus a Holy Spirit could not possibly have become a true human...He just must have appeared that way at times.

In addition, they believed that the spirit and the physical world never impacted one another So that you could do whatever you wanted to do in the flesh and it would never cause a spiritual issue for you. There is no sin, to need for repentance, forgiveness, or substitution because what you do in you body has no impact on your Spiritual life.

So they teach, Jesus was never human, never died on the cross and never resurrected because there was no need to. These Gnostics who were prominent in Greek and Roman culture preyed on people's sensuality. Live it up in the flesh you spirit will be fine.

So the Gnostics who were essentially traveling orgies had no interest in anyone teaching that they would ever be judged for what they are doing on earth. The return of Jesus is always a huge problem for those who claim He doesn't exist.

So fixated were the adversaries on the pleasures of the present that they would not, indeed could not, accept the doctrine of God's future reign. With hearts hardened and minds clouded by "greed" and "corrupt desire" , they were unable to remember the lessons of the past judgments by God .

The idea that Jesus was going to return to judge the living and the dead was particularly problematic for them.

The same argument is prominent in our world today too. Rather than just accepting God's truth as true and surrendering to it, people try to find ways to use God's truth to allow them to keep on sinning or they reject it outright. Either way, they don't want to call a sin a sin and they don't want to think about the possibility of future punishment or accountability

The opponents may have argued that the apostles deliberately invented the notion of future judgment as a means of moral control through fear. Those Christians just want to keep you from having a good time.

In fact, we will learn as we go that deny the return of Jesus is one of the key indicators that we are given to expose false teachers in the church.

Those who deny Jesus return or downplay the judgment at His return are false teachers. You can't present the entire gospel and leave out the Book of Revelation.

This comes in all varieties...There are no end times...or there is no Hell....or there is no judgment...or everyone gets into Heaven...Satan doesn't care which one you pick as long as you don't pick the correct one..that is...Jesus is coming back as a Warrior to Judge those who rejected Him and to set the World Straight.

So Peter wants to remind them...wants them to remember the truth that they have been taught....Cleverly devised myths...from Peter? No Way. So Peter reminds them with his version of "I was there"

2 Peter 1:17–18 (ESV) But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

This is the part I particularly love....That moment when the eyes drift off to past times....and they replay to moment in their minds as if they were there once again....If you think about it. You trust in historical moments depends upon the faith that you have in the person who is recording those events.

The only reason we believe any historical event is because we trust those who witnessed it and reported it. Cleverly devised Myths? Peter says...you forget who you are talking about

No myths from this eyewitness.

In fact, Peter shares with them that He is an eyewitness to more than just the earthly ministry of Jesus...Peter has seen heavenly things too. In fact, Peter tells them...I know the second coming is real because....I have seen it. I am one of three humans who have seen Jesus glorified...one of three human who have heard the Father bless Him. Don't tell me the second coming is a myth. I am a witness to it.

And interestingly Peter chooses a very specific word for eye-witness. He doesn't use the common word....instead he chooses a word from the more classical greek word that speaks of those who have seen the highest of the mysteries known to man. Peter is the only writer in the NT to use this word. He uses the noun here and the verb later in chapter 2 and 3

Peter must have been beside himself. To be an eyewitness to all that Jesus did and then to be challenged by those who knew nothing....So Peter remembers....remembers the moment ....the moment when He knew Jesus was God ....the moment when Peter knew Jesus would return...and the moment when Peter heard the very voice of God.

This historical event in history has three eyewitnesses...and Peter is not so subtly reminding them that he was there.

Luke 9:28–32 (ESV) 28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

Luke 9:34–36 (ESV) 34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

He has seen Jesus in His Glory...He has heard the voice of the Father...He has been an eyewitness to what the second coming will be like.

He says in effect: We aren't making this message up. In fact, we've already seen what the second coming will be like, and we've heard the voice of God himself confirm our Lord's authority. We are reliable reporters and interpreters of what we have seen and heard.

Now the symbolism here is important. Nothing is accidental. Moses was taken up to Mt Sinai to meet with God to receive the Law. Elijah the Prophet never died and was taken up to Heaven. So Standing the Jesus the Messiah, we see the Law and the Prophets. The very foundation of the living church and we see Jesus being glorified. Which points to the future event of the two witnesses in Revelation.

Revelation 11:3 (ESV) 3 And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

About a week after he had spoken to them about his future coming "in his Father's glory with the holy angels", Jesus took Peter, James and John up onto a mountain and was transfigured, "his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light". The glory they saw, the light they witnessed, was not falling on him from above but seemed to be coming from him; he was not reflecting light, he was producing it!

This was like the light that had terrified the people of Israel as they saw it flashing from the peak of Mount Sinai and begged Moses, "Do not have God speak to us or we will die!" (Ex 20:18–19). This was light like that of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the wilderness and terrified their enemies (Ex 13:21).

This is the light which shall shine for the blessing of God's redeemed in the heavenly New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:22–24 (ESV) 22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,

Would these men who had seen such glory then "invent stories" about Jesus? The voice they heard was the very voice of God. The words they heard about Jesus were God's words spoken about Jesus in Jesus' presence

Luke 9:34–36 (ESV) 34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"

These words from the Father echo back to words He spoke through the Psalmist

Psalms 2:7–8 (ESV) 7 I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

So Peter is saying....Invent Stories? Really?

God gave Moses the Covenant on the top of the Mountain where His glory was so strong people didn't want to go near it. Now God has a new covenant in the Blood of Jesus and just like Moses I was on that mountain. I saw it and I heard it. In fact, I feel to my knees in fear. Jesus was glowing.....glowing....I was scared to death...and then the voice...I will never forget it...that voice of God...I can't even describe it. This is my Son, My Chosen One...listen to Him"

Do you think after hearing the very voice of God and seeing Jesus in His full glory that I would dare to make up anything? You obviously have never experienced what I have experienced.

And if you don't believe me...Go talk to John in Ephesus...He was there too. WE ourselves heard the very voice of God. No one who has truly heard the voice of God ever makes anything up.

2 Peter 1:19–20 (ESV) 19 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 words of the prophets are not only written on the subway wall...they are fully revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The eyewitness accounts of the prophets. We have the prophetic Word..the promises of the prophets.....and now they have been more fully confirmed...because Jesus the Messiah has come. What the prophets longed to see we have witnessed.

Peter knows that the apostles did not make up their teaching any more than the Old Testament prophets made up theirs . Both the prophets and the apostles spoke of the ultimate coming of Messiah with power and glory. So he says, in essence, that the apostles simply testify to the certainty of the Old Testament Scriptures.

1 Peter 1:10–12 (ESV) 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Peter says look....I am not the only one claiming the return of Jesus for a Judgment Day...Every prophet...the Entire Old Testament...and Jesus Himself confirmed the very Judgement day these false teachers should be very afraid of.

And we know from Peter's teachings that He lived in this constant awareness and often spoke of the return. How could he not? Peter longed for nothing more than to once again be united with Jesus. Let's look back a bit to some of Peter's Sermons.

At Pentecost when Peter stepped up to deliver the sermon that would convert thousands. He quoted from the prophet Joel...who years before had promised a judgement day...a great and magnificent day.... where those who love Jesus are saved.

Acts 2:20–21 (ESV) 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Another time Peter is peaching in the temple after healing a crippled man...He warns them to repent.....why? because Jesus is coming back to set all things right.



Acts 3:19–21 (ESV) 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Peter...in a very real way...is reminding them and us...that they can trust the eyewitnesses. If they don't trust him, they should trust the prophets..if they don't trust him or the prophets then they should trust the very words of Jesus The prophetic word has been more fully confirmed...Everything aligns Peter says....

You not only need to listen to me Peter tells them....but you need to hold on to the Holy Scriptures as your source of truth. God has given you and me a light to take into the darkness. Once again Peter reminds them of their lifeline. The Word of God...The Word Himself...They are the light. They will lead you through the darkness. Hold onto the them, Peter says, with all that you have.

The way through this world is a dangerously dark path and only the Word of God can lead us safely

Dark carries the idea of a squalid and debasing moral atmosphere. We live in "this present evil age" (Gal 1:4) where there is always danger of being confused by "the ways of the world" (Eph 2:2) or becoming conformed to "the pattern of the world" (Rom 12:2). The only safe course is following Jesus as the Scriptures reveal him and as he has invited us to do, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12).

Paul said to the Galatians that we live in "this present evil age" He warns the Ephesians that we can be confused "by the ways of the world" and He warned the Romans that they should never be conformed to the ways of this world.

There is only one answer...John would tell us...and now Peter is stirring us up by way of reminder...

John 8:12 (ESV) 12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Sadly though...even though the Father left the light on for us...not all would follow the light home.

John 1:3–11 (ESV) 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ... 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

So Peter tells us....reminds us...that we will do well to pay attention to the light...the light of Jesus...revealed in the Scriptures and in person...the light that leads us through the darkness that is our life.

But...and Peter goes back to his main point....there will be a day...a day in the future....a day when we will not longer be in darkness...the day the prophets promised...the day Jesus promised... and the day Peter promised...when Jesus returns...that glorious....magnificent....wonderful day.

When the day dawns....and everything is different....everything is set right....and the morning star rises not in the sky....but rises in your heart.



The idea of a “bright morning star” is a star that outshines all the others, and Jesus is the One who who the prophets foretold ....

**Numbers 24:17 (ESV) 17 I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.**

When Jesus comes, we will not need the prophetic word to shine in a dark place—this sinful world. Then our hearts will be enlightened by the Morning Star himself, and that to which prophecy points will have arrived

On that day when our bodies are transformed in the resurrection and our spirits made perfect in his image, we shall “see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2), we shall “see him face to face” and “know fully” (1 Cor 13:12), and we shall enter into full possession of “the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light” (Col 1:12)

**Revelation 22:16 (ESV)**

**16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”**

To summarize this most crucial verse: Even in his defense of his teaching Peter finds room to exhort Christians to spiritual growth. In this world—murky with lies, dark with sin’s corruption and shadowy with temptation’s deceptions—we must earnestly follow the bright light of God’s lamp, the Scriptures. Our study of the Word will increase the light in our lives until finally “the day dawns and the morning star rises” in our hearts when Christ, who is called the “Morning Star” (Rev 22:16), comes in his glory (Rom 13:11–12), and we are forever illuminated by the great radiance of his presence which will transform us completely (1 Jn 3:2).

The Morning Star Rising...the Messiah...The Light of the World...fully manifested in your heart....

That day when you are no longer following the light....like the Israelites on Mt Sinai....following the light of God through the wilderness...following the light of God through the darkest nights...

But there is a day coming....A day of Judgment....the Day of the Lord...that day...that great and dreadful day of the Lord...call it whatever day you want...but it is a very real day in your very real future.

**Romans 13:11–14 (ESV) 11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.**

A day when you will no longer have to follow the light....because Jesus will be fully revealed to you....Just like He was to me..Peter says...up on top of that Holy Mountain...That light didn't shine on Jesus.....it came from Him! ..And when that same morning star rises in you...you will glow too.

Our word is dark...I believe darker than it has ever been. People are living as if there is no judgment day.....as if there is no sin....and sadly as if there was no Jesus. Peter warns us that we would do well to pay attention.

My Grandfather would sit back in his rocker in the den by the fireplace and gaze off into the fire and into the video reel that was his past...

He always started his stories in a similar manner...."Well Frank...you see the world hasn't always been the way it is today...Back when I was young like you...things were very different...."

And yet...as he shared the life he had witnessed....in many ways it was the same...I think he knew that....that is why he would tell me the stories....Sure times were different, but people are not.

The more I saw his past...the more I saw my future. I think he knew that too.

That is how I see Peter...Just like my granddad...toward the end of his life...gazing off into the past...sharing what he had witnessed...knowing it would impact my future.

Stirring me up by way of reminder... refreshing those memories...and creating ways to always remember.

My Granddad knew what Peter knew. There would be people coming...People who don't love me the way he did....People who want to teach me false things and lead me astray....People who want to convince me that what I know to be true...is not.

My Granddad didn't just tell stories to share his past....He told his stories so He could share in my future.... His stories always had a point....a lesson that he wanted to make sure I knew....something He knew to be true because he had lived it...he was a witness to it....And I would do well to remember it....I thank God for my Granddad....and I thank God for Peter. Let's Pray.