

Second Coming of Christ is Certain, part 1

Recently in the New York Times, it was published that the New York Union Theological Seminary announced that they had held a ceremony where members were able to come and pray to plants in the center of the chapel. Essentially what they did was allow people to bring plants to the center of the chapel and then people came and prayed to the plants. There was a number of very interesting news clips that were available and one of them came from Twitter and said,

Today in chapel, we confessed to plants. Together, we held our grief, joy, regret, hope, guilt and sorrow in prayer; offering them to the beings who sustain us but whose gift we too often fail to honor.

What do you confess to the plants in your life?¹

That was an amazing statement. The article continued with,

“When Robin Wall Kimmerer spoke at Union last year, she concluded her lecture by tasking us—and all faith communities—to develop new liturgies by which to mourn, grieve, heal

and change in response to our climate emergency,” one [Union Theological Seminary] UTS tweet said. “We couldn’t be prouder to participate in this work.”

“So, if you are poking fun, we’d ask only that you also spend a couple moments asking: Do I treat plants and animals as divinely created beings?” another tweet

proposed in its ecological examination of conscience. “What harm do I cause without thinking? How can I enter into new relationship with the natural world?”

Tuesday’s ritual seemed in consonance with the seminary’s approach to the Christian faith.

“Progressive theology has long taken shape at Union, where faith and scholarship walk together to be a moral force in the world,” declares the seminary website in its mission statement. “Grounded in the Christian tradition and responsive to

the needs of God’s creation, a Union education prepares its students for committed lives of service to the church, academy, and society.”²



1. Thomas D. Williams, PH.d. “Union Theological Seminary Holds ‘Confession to Plants’ in Chapel Ceremony.” Breitbaert. 18 Sep 2019.

2. Ibid.

It is blasphemous that these people did that. Can you imagine this seminary was training men and women for ministry in a church? They are training men and women to be pastors, and actually putting plants in the center of a chapel and expect everyone to pray to the plants! It sounds like something out of the Old Testament where people bowed down and worshiped idols.

Romans 1 describes exactly what happened. Romans 1:20 says,

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. Romans 1:20 (NASB)

This verse describes how that since the creation, the invisible attributes of God have been and are available for people to see. The verse says they are clearly seen, being understood. So they are without excuse. Then in verse 21, God says,

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Romans 1:21 (NASB)

It is obvious that those at Union Theological Seminary in New York think they are wise. They think that they are being spiritual. But verses 22-23 say,

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Romans 1:22-23 (NASB)

We could add plants! The message is that they have exchanged the glory of God, the worship of our glorious God, for the worship of what He has created - including in this case, plants. That is really sad. I have to admit that it is really stunning to see that a seminary that was founded with the pur-

pose of training men to be pastors has now abandoned the faith. That is what they have done.

In 1 Corinthians 3:18, Paul the apostle writes this about what has become true in our culture. In 1 Corinthians 3:18-20, he writes this,

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS." 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 (NASB)

This is a very amazing statement. They think they are wise. But they are foolish. The reasonings of the wise are useless. Paul was characterizing the condition that existed at the time that he was writing and it is still true today. They reject the true God. They are fools. As the Psalmist said, the fool says in his heart that there is no God.

1 John 5 explains why we have this problem. I should add before we read the verse that one of the reasons we have this problem is that man is born into spiritual darkness and the evil one is able to capture them. 1 John 5:19 says,

We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the *power of* the evil one. 1 John 5:19 (NASB)

The verse makes the point that believers belong to God and He gives us spiritual light. Jesus said that if you come to me, you will become sons of light. So we are sons of light. We are not sons of darkness, but the rest of the world are sons of darkness. They lie in the power of the evil one. The New American Standard has "power of" in italics. It is implied. It is better to read the verse as, "the whole world lies in the evil one, in the power and control of the devil."

That is one of the reasons why we are seeing the things and conditions that we are seeing in the world today. That is why the Union Theological Seminary is praying to plants in the center of their chapel. They are not truly believers. They have

abandoned the true faith. They are unbelievers who think that they are believers. That is the real truth! They think they are approved by God, but true Christians would not pray to plants.

In Ephesians 2:2, we find out that the devil is referred to as the Prince of the Power of the Air. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, we are told that Satan is the god of this world and that fits with 1 John 5:19. The devil is in control of this world and will be until the Second Coming of Christ when Christ will defeat him. Then he will be chained and be put into a prison for a thousand years. After the thousand years, he will be released and a rebellion will occur after which he will be sent to the Lake of Fire where he will live for eternity. So, his time is short and he knows it. He is trying to drag everybody he can with him into hell. He is succeeding and there will be many people with him.

In Deuteronomy 32, Moses wrote this passage in the Song of Moses. He is talking about gods or goddesses and he makes this very interesting statement about what people are sacrificing to. Verse 17 says,

**They sacrificed to demons who were not God,
To gods whom they have not known,
New gods who came lately,
Whom your fathers did not dread.
Deuteronomy 32:17 (NASB)**

The message is that Israel was offering sacrifices to what they thought was a god but actually they were sacrificing to a demon and not to the true God.

So there is this contrast. We either offer to demons or we offer to God. We only have two choices. Atheists are worshipping demons and following their teachings. In 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 we will find the same message. But I want to jump to 1 Corinthians 1 first. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul is again talking about wisdom. Talking about foolishness. In verses 18-21, he says,

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

**“I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE,
AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.”**

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 1 Corinthians 1:18-21 (NASB)

So the message is that the Scriptures, the Bible, is the wisdom. The world, because they are perishing, because they are spiritually blind, are sons of darkness. They are in sin. They are slaves to sin. They cannot see the truth. They do not understand the truth. They think that they are clever. God says, “the cleverness of the clever, I will set aside.” Then preach the word of God, which they reject.

Matthew 13 will help us understand what has happened to the Union Theological Seminary. What I have been doing with these verses so far is to help all of us understand why we are in the situation that we are in our world. We are in a battle between God and Satan. Right now Satan has control of this world until the second coming of Jesus. The devil is being effective in causing unbelievers to join him and they are headed to hell or the lake of fire unless they come to faith in Jesus Christ. In Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus gave us a parable. Then in verse 36-43, He explained the parable. Right now I am not interested in all of the parable. I am just interested in part of the parable. Verse 36 says,

Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned

with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.” Matthew 13:36-40 (NASB)

Then He continued talking about judgment. What I want you to see here is that the Son of Man is the one who sows the good seed. Jesus said that the evil one, that is the devil, Satan, sows the bad seed. That is the parable. So, what does this mean? Well, a tare is something that looks just like wheat. It is actually a weed. But when it starts growing up with the wheat, the real thing, it looks like wheat. It is not until it is fully grown that you can determine that the tares are tares and not the real thing. What Jesus was saying is that the devil has planted the tares and they look like Christians. That is the point. They look like the real thing. I believe that there are tares in our churches. I believe there are tares in the leadership team in some churches. I believe there are tares preaching in some churches. They look like the real thing. They are not. And how can you tell? Listen to or read what they teach and what they say. If you could observe what they are doing when no one else is looking, you could discover if they are really a tare. Union Theological Seminary is no longer a true seminary. It is just an organization of the world populated by tares who are not true Christians. That is why they were praying to plants. Unfortunately, that is true in many churches, organizations, and many seminaries across the country. I am not saying that every seminary is like Union Theological Seminary, but there are men in some seminaries who are tares. That is what I am trying to say.

Now if we look at 1 Timothy 4, you will discover what those tares do. The reason the tares do this is because they are in the power, in the control of the devil. 1 Timothy 4:1 says,

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with grat-

itude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:1-5 (NASB)

This passage is telling us that in the latter times, many will fall away from the faith. Why? Because they are going to be paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. The message of this verse is really simple. In the latter times, doctrines of demons are going to become more prevalent. For example, we can see that in Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, and in the Jehovah’s Witnesses. We see that in religions and cults all around the world and in different churches. You cannot believe how many organizations that claim to be Christian actually teach error. Some even deny that Jesus is truly God, but yet they claim to be Christian. Union Theological Seminary is part of this same mix. This now brings us to our study.

Our Study. You might be wondering, how does this introduction connect to our study? The answer is that 2 Peter is about false teachers. 2 Peter is about false prophets. Starting in 2 Peter 1:16, the apostle Peter lays out a defense why we should believe what he said. In chapter 2, he is going to address false prophets or false teachers. Then in chapter 3, he is going to start talking about some of the false doctrines they taught. For example, some taught Christ is not returning. This will become clear even in our study today. Let us look at verse 16, and see what Peter is telling us. In verses 16-18, he said,

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 2 Peter 1:16-18 (NASB)

Now that is as far as we will go right now. Verses 16-21 are a unit. This is a defense of why we should believe Peter. We are only going to look at verses 16-18 because we do not have

time to go through all of it in this study.

Peter Did Not Create Myths (v 16a). So, in verse 16 notice that he said, “we did not follow cleverly devised tales.” If we look at different Bibles, we discover that the phrase, “cleverly devised tales,” is translated differently in different Bibles. The New American Standard says “cleverly devised tales.” The ESV says, “cleverly devised myths.” The NIV also says, “cleverly devised stories.” Now you might wonder why the ESV says, “cleverly devised myths.” The reason is that the Greek word that is translated as myths is *mythos* from which we get the English word “myth.” So, Peter is saying, we did not follow cleverly devised myths. Think about this with me. What are myths? The Romans and Greeks had gods and goddesses - Jupiter, Venus, Apollos. We refer to their stories as mythology. Myths are not really truth. The Canaanites and the Egyptians worshiped gods and goddesses. We refer to those stories as myths or mythology. What are fables? Examples are “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” “Alice in Wonderland,” or “The Three Little Pigs,” and on goes the list. So Peter is saying, “we did not follow cleverly devised myths, tales, fables. That is not what we did. It is interesting that the word for “cleverly” has the idea of making something wise. It comes from the root word for wisdom. It is the idea of making something wise. Somebody did not sit down and scheme how to do this. They did not plan how to deceive everybody, or teach them some fictitious story. So, Peter is defending himself against the charge of being a false teacher.

Peter Witnessed Jesus’ Majesty (v 16b). As we are going to discover later on in chapter 3, he will say the false teachers are actually denying the second coming of Christ. That is why he says in the last part of verse 16 that he was an eyewitness via a revelation of the second coming of Christ. He did not create tales, myths, and fables. He said he did not do that,

... when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 2 Peter 1:16b (NASB)

Peter says he actually saw this. We can trust him. That is his first defense. His first defense is that he was an eyewitness.

In verses 19, 20 and 21, Peter is going to make the defense that what he has been teaching us about Christ is prophetic. What he told us about the second coming of Christ is actually from prophecy. That will be his second defense. We are only going to look at the first defense in this study - that he was an eyewitness. He was an eyewitness of the power and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes people have looked at verse 16 and think, perhaps Peter is really talking about Christ’s first coming. That is, His virgin birth, His ministry, His death on a cross, and His ascension into heaven. They believe that is what Peter is talking about. But that is not what Peter is talking about. We know that the apostles clearly saw Christ’s ministry, and the glory that was displayed during His ministry. They saw His death. They clearly saw His resurrection. That is all very clear to us.

There is a very interesting passage in John 1:14. It says,

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NASB)

The apostle John said, “we saw His glory.” What does he mean by “glory?” He means that not only did they see Jesus in His Shekinah glory, but they also saw the glory of all that He did - the miracles, wonders, signs, walking on water, multiplying food, and the healings. It is been suggested that Jesus probably healed every known disease in the land of Canaan while He was ministering among us. The word for “coming” clinches the whole thing. *Parousia* occurs 24 times in the New Testament. Eighteen times it refers to the second coming of Christ. *Parousia* appears in Matthew 24:3, 27, 37 and 39. Every time that word is used, it refers to the second coming of Christ. That is the same word that is used here. So, we believe that what Peter is talking about is the second coming of Christ. He was an eyewitnesses. Now, think about that. How could they actually see the second coming of Jesus? It did had not yet happened.

Peter Heard the Majestic Glory (v 17). So, what is Peter talking about? We will get the answer in verse 17.

For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 2 Peter 1:17-18 (NASB)

Peter says they were on a mountain and while on that mountain, they saw what was happening and heard a statement,

This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased. 2 Peter 1:17b (NASB)

Now where did this happen? Well, if you were to take this phrase, “My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” and you were to find every occurrence of that in the Gospels, you find that the phrase shows up two times. Two times a voice from heaven speaks about Jesus. Turn to Matthew 3:13. I’ll show you the first time. Verses 13-14 say,

Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” Matthew 3:13-14 (NASB)

He was surprised. Verses 15-17,

But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” Matthew 3:15-17 (NASB)

That is the first time a voice was heard from heaven making a statement about Christ.

The second time is in Matthew 17:5. We’ll start with verse 1. We read,

Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John . . . Matthew 17:5 (NASB)

So, how many apostles were with Peter the second time? Two others. There were Peter, James, and his brother John.

. . . and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. Matthew 17:1 (NASB)

So that fits exactly what Peter was talking about in 2 Peter 1:17, 18. It doesn’t fit the baptism. Why? Because the baptism was in the Jordan River, down low. Peter explicitly tells us he was up on a mountain, not down in a river. This passage is what Peter is referring to here. Then in verse 2, we read,

And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. Matthew 17:2 (NASB)

Jesus appeared like the sun. This is His Shekinah glory.

And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Matthew 17:2-4 (NASB)

When we look at the accounts in Mark and Luke, we are told that Peter said this because he was a little nervous and really wasn’t sure what to say. Verse 5,

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” Matthew 17:5 (NASB)

This is what he is talking about. You know what Peter is doing in 2 Peter 1:17-18? He is saying, I was an eyewitness of His glory that will be displayed at His second coming. You

know what that tells us about the second coming? When Jesus comes at the second coming, He is going to be shining like the sun. He is going to come in his Shekinah glory. The whole world, we are told, will see Him. Peter said, "I was an eyewitness of His power and coming." Peter was right there. Scripture tells us that he was there. Mark and Luke both tell us Peter was there. So let us go back to 2 Peter. 2 Peter chapter 1. Notice what he says in verse 17,

[For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory . . . 2 Peter 1:17a \(NASB\)](#)

Peter Heard "This My Beloved Son" (v 17b).

I want you to notice that Jesus received honor and glory. He received glory by the Shekinah glory and He received honor because the Father said,

[This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased. 2 Peter 1.17b \(NASB\)](#)

So, Peter is defending himself. He is an eyewitness and what he has told them is the truth. Christ is coming again for the second time and Peter has seen the glory that will be displayed. Now, you might wonder what mountain did this occur on? In Mark 8:27, we are told,

[Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi . . . Mark 8:27 \(NASB\)](#)

That is very near Mount Hermon. The Mount of Transfiguration account begins then in Mark 9:1. So, Jesus was very close to a mountain just before the Mount of Transfiguration account. We believe then that the transfiguration very likely occurred on Mount Hermon.

Conclusion. I want to conclude our study with a couple of thoughts. First of all, Peter was not the only eyewitness. James was an eyewitness and John was an eyewitness. There were some others who saw Jesus. The apostles saw Jesus after His resurrection. They saw Him in His immortal body. We are told in 1 Corinthians 15 that 500 brethren saw Him. We

are talking about eyewitnesses now - eyewitnesses of Christ. If we were to look at historical records, we would learn of a document written by Pontius Pilate that was in the archives of Rome. It was a report that he had to submit, in which he refers to Christ and the miracles that Christ did. He gives an account that tells of Jesus' death on a cross.

If we were to read the Roman historian Flavius Josephus, we would find that he confirms that Jesus lived and did miracles and fulfilled prophecies and died on a cross. There were eyewitnesses that Jesus really lived, that He died on a cross and did miracles. There is a very interesting document in which Jewish priests are rebuked for using Jesus's name to cast out demons. What is interesting about that document is that Jewish priests were using Jesus' name to cast out demons! They did that because it worked! Later, Jewish priests were told not to use the name of Jesus in that manner. That is another indication that Jesus lived and did miracles and that what we read in the Gospels is true.

The early church fathers attest to the existence of Christ and what He did. A man by the name of Papius, who was a disciple of John, confirms the truthfulness of what we read in the Scriptures. So, Peter is not trying to defend the fact that Jesus existed and died on a cross and came back to life. He is trying to defend the accusation that Jesus isn't coming back a second time. The false prophets were not denying that Jesus existed or that Jesus did those things. They were denying explicitly that Jesus was going to return. It had been so long. Where is His coming? So, Peter was defending the truth against that false teaching. He began his defense in the passage that we have been looking at when he said, "I was an eyewitness of His coming glory." Let us pray.