

2 Peter 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Analysis

Chapter 1, verse 21 - Comprehensive theological analysis. Peter continues his urgent apostolic warning about the dangers facing the church. This verse contributes crucial insights to understanding false teachers' characteristics, God's judgment patterns, and believers' proper response. The Greek terminology reveals theological precision in Peter's argument, emphasizing both divine sovereignty in salvation and human responsibility in sanctification.

The immediate context connects to Peter's broader argument about maintaining doctrinal purity and moral integrity while awaiting Christ's return. Greek word studies illuminate the specific nature of the threats Peter identifies and the resources God provides for perseverance. This passage resonates with Old Testament prophetic warnings, Jesus' teaching about false prophets, and Paul's pastoral instructions, demonstrating biblical theology's consistency across testaments and authors.

Christ-centered interpretation reveals how this verse ultimately points to Jesus as the standard for truth, the source of power for godly living, and the coming Judge who will vindicate the faithful and condemn the wicked. The eschatological dimension reminds believers that present struggles occur within the larger framework of redemptive history culminating in Christ's glorious return and the establishment of the new heavens and new earth.

Historical Context

The first-century church faced unique challenges from both pagan Greco-Roman culture and Jewish opposition, while also contending with internal threats from false teachers who distorted apostolic doctrine. Peter writes in the shadow of Nero's persecution (AD 64-68) and his own approaching martyrdom, making this letter his urgent final testament to the churches. Early Gnostic influences promoting secret knowledge, antinomian ethics, and denial of Christ's physical return created the specific heresies Peter addresses.

Understanding the social, religious, and philosophical context of the Roman Empire illuminates Peter's concerns and arguments. The delay of Christ's parousia created pastoral challenges as expectations of imminent return gave way to questions about timing and certainty. Jewish apocalyptic literature, Greco-Roman moral philosophy, and mystery religions all influenced how different groups understood salvation, ethics, and eschatology, requiring apostolic clarification to maintain orthodox Christianity.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge compromises you might be tempted to make for cultural acceptance or personal comfort?
2. What practices would help you grow in discernment to recognize and resist false teaching in its contemporary forms?
3. How should the certainty of Christ's return and judgment shape your priorities, relationships, and use of time and resources?

Interlinear Text

οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἄνθρωποι φερόμενοι ποτέ¹
not For by the will men as they were moved in old time
G3756 G1063 G2307 G444 G5342 G4218

προφητεία ἀλλ' ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἄγιοι φερόμενοι
the prophecy but by Ghost holy as they were moved
G4394 G235 G5259 G4151 G40 G5342

ἐλάλησαν οἱ ἄγιοι θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι
spake holy of God men
G2980 G3588 G40 G2316 G444

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 1:11 (Spirit): Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Luke 1:70 (Holy): As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

2 Samuel 23:2 (Spirit): The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.

Acts 1:16 (Holy): Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

Hebrews 10:15 (Holy): Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

Acts 3:18 (Prophecy): But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

Revelation 19:10 (Spirit): And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Hebrews 3:7 (Holy): Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

Mark 12:36 (Holy): For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Numbers 16:28 (Parallel theme): And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.

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