**Eyewitnesses to His Majesty** 2 Peter 1:12 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. **16**For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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. **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, **20**knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21**For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (ESV)

In light of what Peter knows to be His imminent death, he sees fit to remind believers of all these things. We all need to be reminded of even the most basic spiritual truths. The constant reminders of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the steps to salvation, the place of morality in the Christian life, the necessity of baptism, the inerrancy of Scripture and so on are all helpful and keep us from veering off into nonsensical false teaching. Peter wants his fellow believers—those who had obeyed his teaching and instruction—to avoid falling into this fatal trap after his departure from earth.

Peter knows his life is near its end. He not only sense it, but he knows it and has had it confirmed by Jesus. It’s hard to know for sure if Peter feels this way because he had a vision or voice of God speak these things to him, or if he is referring to his conversation with Jesus in John 21 where Jesus showed Peter the way by which he would die one day. Regardless, Peter understood the importance of preparing his fellow believers for his soon death. This is perhaps a lesson he learned from Jesus Himself, as Jesus spent much time preparing His disciples for His departure from earth. Christ wanted to know that His followers had a good foundation before He departed, and Peter wants the same. This is a theme that permeates the whole Bible as even the book of Deuteronomy is essentially the story of Moses preparing the people to enter the Promised Land without him there to guide them. Some people believe that verse 15 is a reference to Mark’s gospel as tradition tells us that Mark is sharing firsthand accounts recounted to him by Peter. Perhaps Peter wanted to make sure the gospel stories were in writing for future generations. This would make sense too, as there was no gospel written yet at the time of Mark. It was the first one written.

Regardless, there is an urgency to this letter directly from Peter. An urgency to this call to holiness and righteous living that Peter gave at the beginning of this chapter. The urgency is because of both Peter’s death and the need to remind believers of these things before he passes on, but also because of the unknown time of Jesus’ return. His return is imminent and Peter knows this and he wants his fellow believers to know this so they may be spurred into righteous living in light of this truth. Peter’s hope is that we keep Biblical morality at the forefront of all spiritual pursuits. This is what Peter hopes believers will remember after he is gone. That they can live a holy life, because God has given us everything we need to do so. But we also do this in light of the Lord’s coming. Above all, Peter wants believers to remember Christ’s coming—really both comings of Jesus. The first coming saw Jesus live as a human being on earth, die for our sins and rise from the grave three days later. The second coming will see Jesus riding on the clouds in glory and majesty. Peter has actually been an eyewitness to the glory of God that will be seen one day by all people. The image is impressed upon his mind and has never left in thirty plus years.

Peter references the experience he had on the mountain with Jesus, something we call the Transfiguration of Jesus. We see this Transfiguration described in Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9:

Luke 9:28 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. **33**And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. **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. (ESV)

Peter says, “I have seen with my own eyes”! “I am an eyewitness to the majesty of God”. In school we learn about primary, secondary and tertiary sources. Peter is not some secondary or tertiary source. He is a primary source. He has seen God’s glory with his own eyes. He seen a preview of what is to come. He knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus will return and that it will be glorious. While most believers at that time, such as Paul, were confident that Jesus would return before they died, it appears Peter has accepted his fate by death. How could he not? Jesus told him in John 21 that death was a part of his journey. There was to be no rapture for Peter. Too bad he couldn’t share in the glorious showing of God’s glory one earth! Oh wait—he did! He saw it on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured! And now he is sharing that word with fellow believers to remind them of their need to be prepared for Jesus’ coming.

(Just a little aside here: Peter might have thought, however, that Jesus would still come back soon. For one, Jesus said many times that this generation would not pass away before His kingdom came. Not only this, but when Jesus told Peter how he would die, Peter asked if John would live to see Jesus return. Jesus didn’t give a straight answer but His answer did seem to spur talk amongst the disciples that John would not die before the return of Jesus. And in a sense, he didn’t. He was the only one of the original disciples not to die a martyr. He was persecuted for his faith but did not die. And before he did die, he had another vision of Christ’s return and the end of time. In a sense, the generation had not passed away before seeing the kingdom of God)

But Peter knows the value not just in his own experience and eyewitness account, but in the Scriptures themselves. The Scriptures continue to be a source of light for all people until Christ returns. And Peter wants believers to remember this most basic truth: the Word of God is inspired, inerrant, infallible. The Holy Spirit directed the writing of the Bible. The believers can put trust and faith in the words of the Old Testament because their direct source is God. Not only this. I take this passage to be a direct stamp of God’s approval and confirmation of the words of the apostles in the New Testament. Yes, Peter was an eyewitness of God’s majesty, but His letter was also authoritative. Little did Peter know that God would canonize his words in this letter as a part of Scripture as well one day. Just a reminder: No council canonized the books of the Bible. God canonized them and the councils simply affirmed this. Maybe saying God “canonized” them isn’t even proper. God directed the writings of the books of the Bible, including Peter’s two letters and because they were inspired by God they were automatically canon. They were at the time of their writing already the inspired Word of God.

Ultimately we come to this: Confidence in Scripture is necessary to grow and avoid fatal traps in the Christian life. The fatal trap of false teaching might be the primary one Peter is trying to help believers avoid. God confirms His word! And we have His Word. We can go to it to be reminded daily of His will and way for our lives. We have a glimpse of His majesty in this majestic book! We may not be eyewitnesses of His majesty ourselves just yet, but we know where to go to read from one who has been. And one day, whether by death or rapture our departure from this earth will lead us straight into His majesty. Let us be reminded of this and reminded by His Word. Once again, God has given us everything we need!