

Peter said that some of Paul's Scriptures are "hard to be understood" [2Pe. 3:16]. Yet the fisherman also wrote some difficult verses. When expositors puzzle over some of his words, you know he's guilty of the same thing.

One difficulty discussed in this lesson is a "hard to understand" verse Peter wrote. He said this in 2Pe. 1:20: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

Albert Barnes (1832-72) wrote this about this same verse: "To the present time there is no general agreement among expositors as to its meaning." Here's his full opinion:

The more correct interpretation, as it seems to me, is that which supposes that the apostle teaches that the truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention; were not their own opinions, but were of higher origin, and were imparted by God; and according to this the passage may be explained, "knowing this as a point of first importance when you approach the prophecies, or always bearing this in mind, that it is a great principle in regard to the prophets, that what they communicated was not of their own disclosure; that is, was not revealed or originated by. [Barnes' notes on the Bible].

After all these words, Brother Barnes leaves his readers more confused than ever. So, let's see if we can learn what Peter meant in this difficult verse.

**The Interpretation of Bible Prophecy**

The word "private" [G2398] in 2Pe. 1:20 conveys self. This means that that neither you nor I can interpret prophecy without help. And if you and I need help, so does everyone. And if everyone needs help, then none of us can help the rest of us interpret Bible prophecy.

Who can help? Consider this before seeking the answer: Peter didn't say that you cannot interpret Bible prophecy; he said that you cannot do this by yourself. You

can interpret prophecies if you get the right help. Who can help? Peter's next verse explains what he meant:

2Pe. 1:21: *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.*

And even that verse can use some explanation. The Holy Spirit inspired holy men of God to write the scriptures. Therefore, only the Holy Spirit knows what these scriptures mean. So then, without help from the Holy Spirit, no one can understand bible prophecy.

Peter's focus was on the OT when he wrote those two verses; the OT is the source of the NT. I'm not saying that 1Pe. 1:20 doesn't apply to the NT. Other than a few hard to understand scriptures in the Epistles, 1Pe 1:20 applies to the entire NT.

Okay, but now we need to confirm that we have rightly understood what Peter wrote. We need a second witness. Paul helps us with this.

*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God (1Cor. 2:11).*

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God (1Cor. 2:12).*

How does the Holy Ghost reveal the things of God? "... we have received ... the spirit ... of God; that we might know the things ... of God." Thus, the Holy Spirit becomes our second witness by revealing the things of God.

Although we cannot interpret any prophecy of Scripture by ourselves, we can interpret prophecy with help from the Holy Spirit. He's the only One Who can help because He's the only One Who knows what He meant when He spoke through the mouths of the prophets.