

Nehemiah and Ezra: God's grace outworked

Nehemiah: moved to identify with the people;

To show courage and find favour with the King

To acknowledge God's hand on his life

To return to Jerusalem and motivate the people to work

To stand against opposition and exhort the people to be strong

To pray for protection

To admonish them for their double standards

To administer justice, demonstrating it in his own life.

Ezra: born into the Levitical priesthood

Devoted to studying the word of God

Raised up in exile to teach the Law

Moved by God to return to Israel with the books of the law

1 All **the people** came together in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel.

2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of **men** and **women** and all who were able to understand.

3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the **men**, **women** and others who could understand.

And all **the people** listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

4 Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion.

Beside him on his right stood the priests; and on his left were more priests

5 Ezra opened the book. All **the people** could see him because he was standing above them;

and as he opened it, **the people** all stood up. 6 Ezra praised the Lord,

the great God; and all **the people** lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!"

Then **the people** bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

7 The Levites instructed **the people** in the Law while **the people** were standing there.

8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that **the people** understood what was being read.

9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law,

and the Levites who were instructing **the people** said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all **the people** had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared.

This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

11 The Levites calmed all **the people**, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve."

12 Then all **the people** went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

Psalm 138

I will give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;

before the gods I will sing your praise;

² I bow down toward your holy temple

and give thanks to your name

for your steadfast love and your faithfulness,

for you have exalted above all things

your name and your word.

³ On the day I called, you answered me;

my strength of soul you increased.

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Even though the fig trees have no blossoms,
and there are no grapes on the vines;
even though the olive crop fails,
and the fields lie empty and barren;
even though the flocks die in the fields,
and the cattle barns are empty,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord!
I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!
The Sovereign Lord is my strength!
He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
able to tread upon the heights.

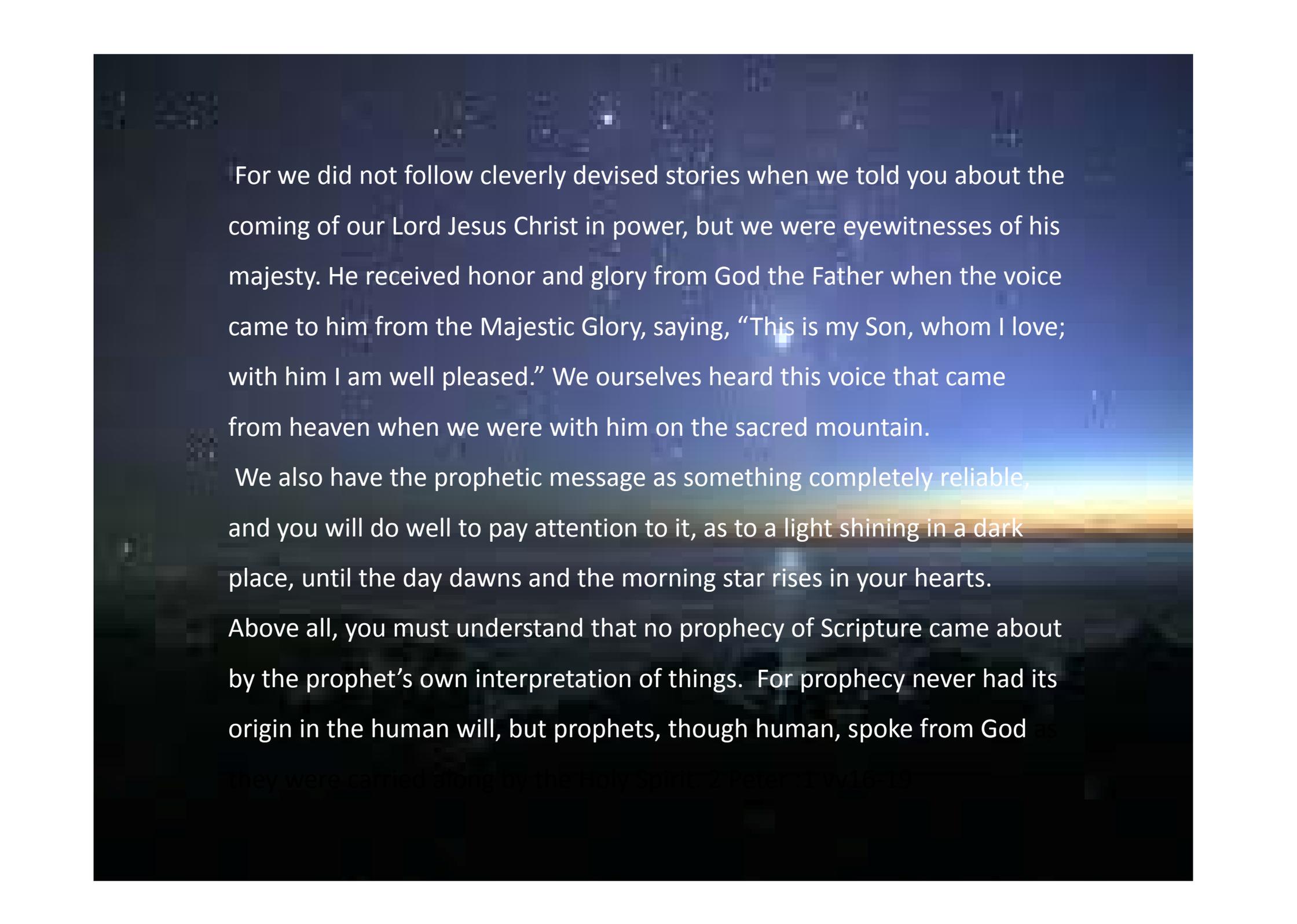
So the people went out and cut branches and used them to build shelters on the roofs of their houses, in their courtyards in the courtyards of God's Temple, or in the squares just inside the Water Gate and the Ephraim Gate.

So everyone who had returned from captivity lived in these shelters during the festival, and they were all filled with great joy!

The Israelites had not celebrated like this since the days of Joshua son of Nun. Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God on each of the seven days of the festival. Then on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, as was required by law.

On the last and greatest day of the feast
Jesus stood up and cried in a loud voice
“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink
Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said,
Out of them shall flow rivers of living water”

John 7:37, 8



For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God