

Sermon for February 23, 2020 - Transfiguration

2 Peter 1:16–21 (EHV)

**Theme: Jesus' Glory Revealed**

- 1) To Peter on the Mountain
- 2) To us through the Word

*<sup>16</sup> To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup> since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Picture the scene: a scared child comes to his pastor Dad – bothered by thoughts that he just can't seem to get out of his head. "Daddy, how do we know Jesus is real?" His father answers: "Because the Bible tells us, my dear child." "But Daddy," the child responds, "How do we know the Bible is real?"

Can you relate to this child? I certainly can because I remember asking my father very similar questions. Not only that, but the devil still tempts me with these questions today. Doesn't he tempt you too?

The unbelieving world scoffs at us for our faith in Christ – saying things like: if Jesus is God, why doesn't he show himself now? *Where is this promised coming of his?*<sup>i</sup> Worse yet, unbelieving Bible scholars often claim things like: all the miracle stories surrounding Jesus are a mere myth – no different than the hero stories of other cultures.

So how do we answer these people? How do we know that our faith is grounded in truth, when "Bible scholars" with degrees from Universities like Oxford, Harvard, Princeton and Cambridge are telling us that the story of Christ is nothing more than a fairy tale with a moral?

Our sermon text for this morning tells us how we can know Jesus is the Christ and that the Bible is true. With the apostle Peter as our guide, let us have our faith strengthen and see: **Jesus' Glory Revealed** 1) *To Peter on the holy mountain, and 2) To us through the Word*

Part One: To Peter on the Holy Mountain

King Solomon once wrote: *There is nothing new under the sun.*<sup>ii</sup> How true this statement is regarding the world's arguments against faith in Jesus. The Christians to whom Peter first wrote our sermon text faced some of the very same attacks on their faith that we face today. The world told them that their faith was foolish, that there was no proof Jesus is the Son of God and, that the Old Testament is nothing but a book of myths.

In response to those attacks, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Peter to write: <sup>16</sup> *To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

Our faith in Christ is not some foolish fable or false hope that the unbelieving world tries to make it out to be. Unlike other world religions, which are often based merely on the dream or vision of a single person, Jesus revealed his glory to many people in a variety of different ways so that our faith would not merely be based on the witness of one person. Take Jesus' t transfiguration, for example. He didn't just reveal his glory to Peter but allowed James and John to experience it as well. Why? Because it would be easy to dismiss the account of a single person as being "made up" or "a mere dream." But to have three eyewitnesses claim that they all saw the same thing at the same time – well, that is a lot harder to explain away.

Let me illustrate what I mean with a personal story: would you believe me if I told you that I stood on a platform before a crowd of people in the Kremlin near the Patriarch of Moscow – cringing when He attempted to bless me? "What," you might be thinking, "you are pulling my leg." Now, even if I gave you all the crazy details of how it all happened, you might still be tempted to doubt me. But, what if I told you that my mother and father witnessed everything? Well, now my story has credibility. Why? Because you can verify it with my Dad.

In the same way, Peter isn't just describing something he experienced alone. No, two other eyewitnesses were with him – one of whom was still alive. And what exactly did they witness? Listen to Peter tell us:

<sup>17</sup> *For he [Jesus] received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* <sup>18</sup> *We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.*

How do we know that Jesus is more than a mere "wanna-be" religious guru like Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed or Joseph Smith? Because the same Majestic cloud that enveloped Moses at Mount Sinai enveloped Peter, James, and John. And just as the LORD spoke to Moses from the cloud at Sinai, so he also spoke to Peter, James, and John concerning Jesus: *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

And just as Moses and the Israelites never forgot the sight and sounds they heard at Sinai, so also Peter, James, and John would never forget what they experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration. They were given a glimpse of Jesus' glory. He is the Messiah – the very Son of God prophesied about throughout Old Testament Scripture. God the Father was pleased with Jesus because He lived the perfect life in obedience to God's law that we all failed to live – thereby winning the righteousness we need to stand before God. Not only that, but Jesus willingly submitted to his

Father's will. He was on his way to Jerusalem, where he would offer himself up as the once and for all sacrifice of our sins. On the cross, Jesus certainly wouldn't look all that glorious. No, he would look like just another poor schmuck suffering under Roman cruelty. But Jesus was not just another poor schmuck. He is the all-glorious Son of God, through faith in whom we receive forgiveness, life, and salvation.

So, how do we know Jesus really is the Son of God – our Saviour? One reason is the eyewitness accounts people gave who saw his glory – like the one Peter tells us about in our sermon text. But is that the only proof – what three people experienced on a mountain? I mean, even if we accept the fact that they indeed experienced something miraculous, how can we be sure that they weren't mistaken or that they misinterpreted what they saw? Does our faith in God merely rest on the experience of a few people living at one specific point in history? No, it doesn't. Rather, there is an even greater testimony to Jesus' glory than what Peter, James, and John experienced with their own senses, as the apostle explains:

Part Two: To us through the Word

*<sup>19</sup> We also have the completely reliable prophetic word.*

The Bible itself is the biggest reason we are convinced that Jesus is the Christ. “But,” someone might say, “isn't the Bible only one witness? How can the testimony of a single book be sufficient reason to believe in Jesus as the Saviour?”

Well, to answer that question, we must first understand that the Bible is not just a single Book, it's actually a little library: a compilation of many different writings written over a period of 1500 years. The writers of these different documents obviously never had a chance to compare notes, and yet all their writings reveal a perfect unity of message and purpose: in some way or another they all point us to Jesus<sup>iii</sup> – revealing mankind's need for a Saviour, God's promise of a Saviour, and how the LORD works throughout history to bring His Saviour into the world.

And not only is the Bible unified in its purpose and teaching, it is also completely reliable. How so? Well, consider this: except for the prophecies concerning the Last Day (which hasn't yet arrived) every single prophecy of the Bible has been perfectly fulfilled in Christ. And the prophecies of the Scripture are not some vague pronouncements – allowing a person to make almost anything fit. No, the prophecies of Scripture are very specific – rooted in actual history – so as to be verifiable.

Do you want to know how accurate that Scriptures are in prophecy? So accurate that unbelieving scholars will try to use their accuracy against them – claiming that the prophecies of Scripture must have been written after the fact, or the eye-witness account changed overtime to make the Bible so accurate. And do you know what actual evidence they have to support their claims? None. Truth be told, the more they look for actual evidence to prove Scripture wrong, Scripture is revealed to be right.

Because of the absolute reliability of Scripture, Peter writes: *You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts,*

Yes, this world is certainly a dark place: full of ignorance and unbelief. It does not know God and is content to stay in the dark. But God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.<sup>iv</sup> By always pointing us to Jesus it shows us the way of salvation.

Peter describes the effect the Gospel has on a believer as the Morning Star rising in our hearts. What does that mean? Well, Just as the planet Venus (the Morning Star) sometime peeks over the horizon just before dawn, so also the Gospel is a testimony itself that the dawn of our salvation is fast approaching. And so, just as night watchmen would often treasure seeing the Morning Star, so Christians treasure the account of Christ – especially His transfiguration. This account of his glory is the sign of the greater glory yet to come – the day when we will see Jesus face to face and He will raise and change our bodies so that they will reflect his glorious body.<sup>v</sup>

And why will the Gospel have this joyous, hopeful effect on the believer? Peter explains: *<sup>20</sup> since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Here Peter comes to the heart of the matter: The Bible, though written by many people over 1500 years, has only one author. Every word of Scripture has been inspired – that is, given to be written down – by the Holy Spirit. Humans may have penned the Bible just as a secretary might jot down a letter dictated by her boss, but God is the one who gave every word.

And this is why there is such unity in the Bible. This is why the Bible proves Jesus is the Christ, and the historicity of Jesus proves that the Bible is God's infallible Word. The people of this world don't see it. They can't see it because they either refuse to confess their sins, or they refuse to believe that they need a Savior. But believers can be absolutely certain that Jesus is the Christ – just as Scripture says. How so? Because eyewitnesses like Peter saw his glory which the Scriptures foretold and because the Scriptures let us see Jesus' glory through the eyes of faith.

And so, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you are tempted to wonder how you can know for certain that Jesus is real and the Scriptures are true; ask the Holy Spirit for divine wisdom and faith as you meditate on His Word and then read our sermon text to see Jesus' glory revealed.  
Amen

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. 2 Peter 3:3-4

<sup>ii</sup> Ecclesiastes 1:9

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. John 5:39

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Palm 119:105

<sup>v</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54