

## Sermon for March 2, 2014 - Transfiguration

2 Peter 1:16–21 (AAT)

### Theme: Jesus' Glory Revealed

- 1) *To Peter on the Mount*
- 2) *To us through the Word*

<sup>16</sup> We didn't follow any clever myths when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and His coming. No, with our own eyes we saw His majesty. <sup>17</sup> God the Father gave Him honor and glory when from His wonderful glory He said to Him: "This is My Son Whom I love and with Whom I am delighted." <sup>18</sup> We heard that voice speak to Him from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> And we have, as something more sure, the prophetic Word. Please look to it as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Understand this first, that no prophecy of Scripture came as some private explanation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever spoken because a man decided to prophecy, but men said what God gave them to say as they were directed by the Holy Spirit.

Not too long ago, my son asked me the question: how do we know Jesus is real? Now my simple answer to that question was that the Bible tells us so; which led to another question: How do we know the Bible is true?

My son is not the only one asking these questions. I asked them when I was young and am still tempted to ask them today. I think it is safe to say that all Christians have wondered at one point or another: How do we know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? How do we know the Bible is true?

The world immediately attacks us when we ask these important questions. They tell us that all the science in the world is pointing to the fact that the creation account is a myth – just like all the other religious myths in the worlds. They taunt us by saying: "Where is this Christ? He said He was coming soon: and thousands of years do not seem like soon! Look, history goes on as it has before. Stop fooling yourself. You are being irrational, illogical and preventing human progress by holding to your foolish, ancient beliefs."

So how do we answer these attacks? Can we answer them? Where is the proof of our faith? Our sermon text for this morning tells us how we can know Jesus is the Christ and that the Bible is true. Let us find answers to these questions under the theme: **Jesus' Glory Revealed** 1) *To Peter on the holy mountain* 2) *To us through the Word*

### Part One: To Peter on the holy mountain.

Solomon once wrote: *There is nothing new under the sun.*<sup>i</sup> And how true this statement is regarding the world's arguments against our faith in Christ.

The Christians to whom Peter first wrote our sermon text faced the very same questions 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. Later on in this letter, Peter writes: *you should know that in the last days mockers, following their own desires, will come mocking: "He promised to come. What has happened? From the time the fathers fell asleep everything has stayed as it was since the world was first created."*<sup>iii</sup>

Because the LORD knew how the world would taunt and tempt Christians with these accusations until the Day He returns, the Holy Spirit moved Peter to write the letter from which our sermon text was taken.

Peter writes: *We didn't follow any clever myths when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and His coming.*

Unlike the false religions of this world, the Bible is not a book of clever myths and manipulative philosophies. No, the Bible is God's truth that speaks very differently than any other religion in the world. All human philosophy says that you have a spark of goodness inside of you, and it's up to you to unleash it. It is up to you to serve and appease god – to win his favor with your good works.

The Bible does not say this at all. It says that all people are totally corrupt<sup>iii</sup>, that it is impossible to earn God's love: that his righteousness and justice is too great. But the LORD, according to his great, undeserved love for mankind, did not want us lost. So what did He do? He sent His Son to be sacrificed for us on the cross. The LORD lowered himself to serve, suffer and die in order to save us from our own sin – no other religion or philosophy speaks of something like this! The message of the Bible is so utterly different to what the world proclaims.

And to show further that the Bible can be trusted, that the message of Jesus is real, Peter says: *With our own eyes we saw His majesty.* <sup>17</sup> *God the Father gave Him honor and glory when from His wonderful glory He said to Him: "This is My Son Whom I love and with Whom I am delighted."* <sup>18</sup> *We heard that voice speak to Him from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.*

The historical reality of Jesus' existence is beyond any doubt. Only an ignorant fool questions whether or not Jesus actually existed. On top of this, there is more than enough eyewitness evidence of Jesus' divine character. Over 500 people saw him risen from the dead. A large crowd of people physically saw him ascend into heaven. And what is more, Peter himself – together with James and John - actually saw the divine glory of Christ revealed on the mount of Transfiguration.

The experience they had seeing and hearing the divine glory of Christ was something they would not forget and it moved the apostles to do things that no one would do if they were defending a myth. Many people are willing to kill for their cause. But the apostles were different in this: they were not willing to kill, rather they were willing to suffer and be killed for the spread of the Gospel – all the while praying for the conversion of those who persecuted them.<sup>iv</sup> Why? Because they knew that the Jesus they followed was the true God. They saw his divine majesty with their own eyes. They felt the terrifying glory of the LORD: the cloud that once surrounded Mount Sinai back in ancient times when Moses was given the Ten Commandments. They heard God the Father speak from that cloud: *This is My Son Whom I love and with Whom I am delighted.*

And God, when He said this about Jesus, was also fulfilling Old Testament Scripture. In Isaiah 42 (written 700 years before Jesus birth) the LORD prophesied about His special servant in whom He would delight because He would bring salvation to the world. On the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father declared Jesus to be that Servant Isaiah wrote about. In Psalm 2 (written 1000 years before Jesus birth) the Lord speaks about how the world would rage against the LORD and his Messiah, but God would establish the eternal kingdom of his Son and bring all the raging of the world to nothing. When, on the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father said: *"This is My Son,"* he was both quoting and affirming the truthfulness of Psalm 2.

Peter was an eyewitness to the divine glory of Christ – together with 2 others! He saw it with his own eyes and heard with his own ears God the Father testify that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy! Now we might be tempted to think, "It's great that Peter, James and John saw Jesus glorified, but how will

that help me in my struggles with this world. How can I be sure that Jesus is the Christ?" Peter tells us how:

Part Two: To us through the Word

*And we have, as something more sure, the prophetic Word.* The Bible itself is the biggest reason we are convinced Jesus is the Christ. The Bible is actually a compilation of many different writings, written over a period of 1500 years. The writers of these different documents obviously never met and could not compare notes, and yet there is not a single contradiction in Scripture. It is unified. All books of the Bible point to the same thing: mankind's sin and God's great love. Every book of the Bible – somehow and in some way – points to Jesus.

"But," someone might ask, "how do we know the Scriptures are true?" Didn't you just hear what God the Father said about his Son, how He quoted his own Word and said this is talking about Jesus? The fact that Jesus fulfilled every prophecy of the Old Testament – the only exceptions being the prophecies that can't be fulfilled until the Last Day – clearly testifies that the Bible is true and trustworthy. In its thousands of years of history many people have attempted to prove the Bible wrong or historically inaccurate. Even today people are trying to discredit Scripture. The fact is, however, that it hasn't been proven wrong and will never be. The world rages against the Bible, but it continues to stand firm. The person of Jesus himself: all that he is and has done, is more than enough evidence that we can trust the Bible even more than our own senses.

This is why Peter urges: *Please look to it as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts.*

This world is a place 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>v</sup> It shows us the truth and keeps us in His salvation until the Day of deliverance comes. God's word is like the morning star (the planet Venus) that sometime peeks over the horizon to tell you that dawn is fast approaching. God's Word which strengthens our faith in Christ, is the morning star for our souls. It is the sign that our deliverance is fast approaching.

And so 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 we will see Jesus face to face and He will raise and change our bodies, so that they will reflect his glorious body.<sup>vi</sup>

Regarding the certainty of Scripture, Peter says: *Understand this first, that no prophecy of Scripture came as some private explanation.* There is not a single section in the entire Bible that God didn't inspire and intend to be there. And it is not up to us to guess what the Bible "really means" either. The Bible says what it means.

*For no prophecy was ever spoken because a man decided to prophecy, but men said what God gave them to say as they were directed by the Holy Spirit.* Here Peter comes to the heart of the matter. The Bible, though it was 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, when you are tempted to wonder how you can know for certain 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> Ecclesiastes 1:9 (AAT)

<sup>ii</sup> 2 Peter 3:4 (AAT)

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Genesis 6:5 & 8:21; Romans 3:9-20

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Acts 7:60

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

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