

# WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY!

February 19, 2023

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The First Lesson; Exodus 24:12, 15-18

Psalm of the Day; Psalm 148

The Second Lesson; Matthew 17:1-9

Sermon Text; 2 Peter 1:16-21

Sometimes, before we look at a text, it is important to understand the context in which this letter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, was written. I am going to take you back, in your imagination. Imagine you are now living in the year 65AD. You are a Christian, and it is dangerous to be a Christian. You have heard Peter the Apostle has been arrested. You have also heard he is in prison, under Nero, and there is a really good chance he is going to be put to death for his faith in Christ. You are looking over your shoulder, because you don't know what the people in your town, the people you work with, the people who are your neighbors, you don't know what they think about you, as a Christian. You very well could be in danger, as a Christian. And, you are starting to wonder, you are starting to wonder, *“Is it really worth it to be a Christian?”*

And, you are scared.

On top of that, you have religious friends who are trying to get you to question what you believe about Christ. You are looking forward to, and you have been told, Jesus is going to come back someday, and He is going to finally rescue you from all of the trouble in this world, and from your sins. But, you have religious friends who are asking you, *“Do you really think that is really true? I mean, yeah, there was a guy, a historical guy named Jesus, but do you really*

*think He is going to come back, in glory in the clouds, raise all the people from the dead, and He is going to judge the living and the dead? Or, could that just be a myth, a fable?"*

They are getting you to question, *"How do I know this is even true?"*

So, you are scared because you are a Christian. And now you are starting to wonder, *"How do I even know if it is true? And, if I don't know if it is true, why would I want to risk my life, for being a Christian?"*

That is the context Peter writes this letter. He writes the letter to people who are going through that situation.

Now, as he writes the letter, (*the verses we are going to look at*), he is going to make reference to what we call The Transfiguration. We just talked about The Transfiguration, so let me very briefly talk about that, again. Then, we are going to jump in to how Peter uses The Transfiguration in the context I just described.

The Transfiguration happened on a high mountain. We think it was probably Mt. Hermon. It happened when Peter, James, and John were with Christ. The Bible tells us Jesus was transformed before them. So, they saw Him shining. His clothing, His face were like the sun, like lightening, The Bible tells us. It was a clear visual to the disciples that, *"This is God, in the flesh, standing right in front of us!"*

Imagine you are living in 65AD, and you tell your friends, *"Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. He showed His glory. He showed that He is really God."*

What do your religious friends ask?

Now, the natural question would be, *"Why didn't He do that all of the time, then? Why didn't He show His glory all of the time? Why didn't He? Then, everybody would believe He is God."*

To which I heard a pastor give this answer.

***"What if, what if, on the night Jesus was arrested, the enemies***

*came up to Hill, and Jesus asked, 'Who are you looking for?'"*

*"And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.'"*

*"They are ready to arrest Him, and then all of a sudden, He shines through in all of His glory, and they see all of His glory.*

*What do you think they would have done? They would have turned, and run away thinking, 'We are not arresting Him. That is God in the flesh.'"*

*"What if, when He appeared before Caiaphas, the High Priest, and Caiaphas was trying to find Him guilty of blasphemy, and guilty of claiming to be God, and Caiaphas asked Him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the living God?'"*

*"What if, at that point, all of a sudden, Jesus was shining through in all of His glory? He would have seen Jesus, as God in flesh.*

*What if, Caiaphas would have turned, and run away, never arresting Christ?"*

*"What if, when the soldiers were taking their hammers, and were about to drive the nails through Jesus' hands and feet, all of a sudden, shining through was the glory, and the majesty of God, Himself? Those soldiers would have turned around, and run away, and never nailed Jesus to the cross."*

*"So, had He always used His full divine glory, they never would have crucified Him, never would have put Him on a cross, and He never would have paid for your sins."*

Now, I am going to get back to the context. Peter is going to point to The Transfiguration. He is talking to people who are scared about being Christian, and he is talking to people who are questioning, *"How do I even know that a lot of this stuff is true?"*

Here is the test. Peter said,

**"To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ..."**

Here he is talking about the transfiguration.

**“...but we were eye witnesses of His majesty. 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.' We heard this voice, which came out of Heaven, when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 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, since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**

These are your words Heavenly Father. Lead us in the way of truth.  
Your Word is truth.  
Amen

Now, I want you to notice Peter says this. **“To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables...”**

Another translation says,

**“...sophisticated myths, when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ...”**

Here in the Greek, when it is talking about His appearance, it is talking about His coming again in glory, someday. Peter is saying, *“This is not a sophisticated myth, like some people are telling you it is.”*

In fact, then he says,

**“...we were eye witnesses of His majesty.”**

So now, I want you to see what Peter does. People are trying to get Christians to question, *“How do I know this is true?”*

And, people were telling Christians, *“Maybe what you are believing is just a bunch of myths. They are a bunch of made up stories.”*

There were lots of religious myths, during the time of the writing of The New Testament. They lived in what was called The Greco-Roman World. There was a whole Greco-Roman Mythology about all of these Greco-Roman gods - Zeus, Apollos, Athena, Diana - all of these supposed gods. But, they were not grounded in history. They were not grounded in any historical events, no real people connected with them. They were just these fantastical stories about these gods. Peter is saying, *“Look. What we are talking about is grounded in history. It happened to real people, in real time. They are real events that can be verified.”*

Now, how do you verify, if something really happened? If you have eye witnesses who say, *“I saw it”*, that is one of the ways you verify something happened. Peter here is telling the Christians, (*who were being told their beliefs were myths*), Peter is saying, *“I was an eye witness. I saw the glorified Jesus on The Mount of Transfiguration. This is a real thing. It really happened to real people, in real time, in real history. It is not a myth.”*

Now remember, this is Peter. He knew, he knew (*if you read just a few verses earlier*) he knew he was about to be put to death for his faith in Christ. He knew what was at stake. If, if he had not seen the glorified Christ, then he knew he was telling a lie. Do you think somebody would be willing to stake their life, and their eternity on telling what they knew to be a lie? Peter here is saying, *“I was an eye witness. So, these are not myths you are hearing.”*

Then, he goes on, and says, *“Even if you have me as an eye witness, you have something a lot more powerful than that to convince you that these are not myths. These are not stories.”*

Look at what he says next.

**“We also have the completely reliable prophetic word,”**

I like what he calls The Bible.

**“...completely reliable prophetic word.”**

I heard the other day there are currently, in the world, twenty-five

writings that claim to be The Word of God. Amongst those twenty-five writings happens to be The Bible. How do you know that The Bible is the Word of God, and those other twenty-four are not The Word of God?

Did you know The Bible does something that none of the rest of those even come close to doing? They can't do it. The Bible makes predictions. That is called prophecy. And, it makes very, very specific predictions. It says these things are going to happen in real time, to real people, in real history. You can go back, and you can verify that it really did happen. If it didn't happen, and The Bible said it was going to happen, and The Bible claims to be The Word of God, but it did not happen, then you know that is not God's Word. But, if it did happen, then you should probably take a good look at this, The Bible, and ask yourself, "*How did the author, the writer know that was going to happen?*"

Let me give you just a few examples. (*We could talk about this all day!*) Did you know this Book predicted before it ever happened, (*and this is very specific*), that the Children of Israel would be in captivity, in Egypt, for four hundred years? It happened. You can go back, and verify it in history. It happened to real people, in real time, just as The Bible predicted. How did the writer know that was going to happen?

Did you know this Book predicts, Isaiah predicted one hundred years, one hundred years before it ever happened, that the Jewish people would be taken in to captivity in Babylon, and that captivity would last a very specific period of time – seventy years? And, he predicted the temple would be destroyed at that time. He predicted that after those seventy years, a man with a specific name, by the name of Cyrus, would free the Jewish people from their captivity. That was all prophesied before that man Cyrus even existed.

Do you know that every, single, one of those things I just mentioned, in real time, in real history, really happened? It gets you to take a

good look at this Book, and ask, *“How did the author know that, before it ever happened?”*

In fact, what Peter is saying is, *“You have this, and it is completely reliable. Whenever it says something is going to happen, it happened.”*

The vast majority of The Old Testament is pointing forward to the coming of Christ. Again, we don't have time to talk about all of these, but there are over two hundred predictions about Christ. It is amazing that in real time, to a real person, in a real place, in real history, all of these predictions came crashing together, and were fulfilled in one Person, and that was Jesus of Nazareth. Peter is saying, *“Look, if anybody tells you this is myths, made up stories, you have verifiable proof this is God's Word. This is the prophetic Word of God. It is completely reliable.”*

So, he is telling the people who were being told to doubt that Jesus is going to come back again some day in glory, *“If the Bible says it is going to happen, well, it is going to happen.”*

Then he explains how this came to be The Word of God. He says, “Prophecy”, talking about The Bible,

**“No prophecy ever came by the will of man,  
but men spoke from God  
as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**

Somebody once described that as, *“Imagine a musician who has a guitar, and is playing the guitar. It is the musician's music. The guitar is just the instrument that is making the sound. In the same way, it was the Holy Spirit's Words, when scripture was being written. That is what The Bible says. And, the people writing them down, they were the ones who were, so to speak, making the sounds, but the Holy Spirit was giving them the exact thoughts and words to write down. So, these are the very, very words of God, Himself. That is why, whenever it makes a prediction, it happens.”*

So, here Peter is saying to anybody, anybody whose faith is being

challenged, and being told, “*Maybe none of this is really true in the first place.*”, Peter said, “*You have the completely reliable Word of God.*”

If you are going through troubles in this life, and you are scared about being a Christian, and you are scared about what people might say, think, or do, Peter said, “*You have the completely reliable Word of God.*”

Is it worth risking everything for Jesus? Is it worth clinging to Him no matter what?

I love how Martin Luther looked at this account of the transfiguration. He used it to comfort anybody who is going through any trials, or troubles in life. I don't know what your trials are, but everybody has gone through trials. I know you are. I don't have doubt about that. Some of you have family trials. Some of you have physical trials. Some of you have emotional trials. Some of you have financial trials. Some of you have friendship trials. You are all going through trials, and we are all looking forward to the day when we are free from those trials, and when Jesus does come back, and takes us to glory. I love how Martin Luther used the transfiguration to comfort you. He said these four things. (*I am going to go through them very quickly.*)

Number one, when you see how Jesus was transformed before His disciples, and they got to see Him, and just a glimpse of all of His glory, and that was when He was still in His mortal body, can you imagine what it is going to be like, when we see Jesus in Heaven, in all of His glory?

Then, here is the comfort he said. “***The Bible promises our bodies will be transformed to be like Jesus' glorious body.***”

Luther used that to comfort people. When you are going through any kind of trouble, (*and this is the completely reliable Word of God*), think about what is going to happen to you.

Then, he said this. Number two. “***What happened on the Mt. of***



***Transfiguration shows us there really is a life after this life.”***

Who appeared with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration? One of them was a guy by the name of Moses. Moses had died fourteen hundred years before he appeared on The Mt. of Transfiguration. Luther said, ***“That proves there is life after this life. There was Moses, speaking to Jesus. He had been in Heaven. And, it proves Jesus' words when He said, 'Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me, will never die.' What a comfort that is to have this completely reliable Word of God show us there is life after this life.”***

Then, he said, number three, ***“What a comfort it shows us that we do not have to be afraid of death. Moses died. And what happened to him? He died, and he went to Heaven.”***

Then, the last thing Luther said was, ***“The fact that Moses died, and he went to Heaven is proof your sins are forgiven.”***

Did you know Moses was not allowed (*here is the guy who led the Children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness, headed toward the Promised Land*) did you know Moses was not allowed to enter The Promised Land, because he had sinned? God did not let Moses enter the Promised Land, because he had sinned. But, look where he did get to enter. This sinner got to go to Heaven, itself, Heaven itself in the very presence of God, proving, proving that our sins are forgiven. And of course, we know they have been forgiven, because Christ ultimately died for them.

So, Peter writes this letter to comfort anybody, anybody who is worried, or scared about being a Christian, anybody who is doubting the reliability of Scripture. We have the completely reliable, prophetic Word, and it comforts us through this life.

Amen.

Now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts, and our minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Amen