

Theme: “You Had to Be There!”

2 Peter 1:16-21 (EHV)

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.” ¹⁸ We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ 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.

“You had to be there!” Ever said that before, or heard it said? Maybe you’ve said that line after trying to explain a particularly funny or amazing occurrence, but you realize you just aren’t doing it justice—no one is laughing, or as amazed as you thought they’d be at your joke or your story, so you simply say: “Well, I guess you just had to be there.”

Maybe that phrase could be said by the people from the Bay Area who have shelled out *thousands* of dollars even for “nosebleed” tickets way up in the upper deck to watch their 49ers play live and in person in the Super Bowl this evening. When it’s all said and done, and if their team wins, of course, perhaps they will say, “It was all worth it! What an experience! You *had* to be there!”

How about the incredible event that we hear Peter reference in our text, Jesus’ Transfiguration? We read about it in our Gospel reading from Matthew as well: Jesus’ **“face was shining like the sun. His clothing became as white as the light.” (Matthew 17:2 EHV)**; Moses and Elijah appeared with Him; God the Father’s voice rang out from the bright cloud, **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.” (Matthew 17:5 EHV)**. Peter, along with James and John, were **“eyewitnesses of his majesty”** and heard for themselves God the Father’s voice **“from within the Majestic Glory” (2 Peter 1:16-17)** that day on the mountain. You’d think that this faith-strengthening mountain top experience would definitely be one of those events where Peter would just have to say to us, “You had to be there!”

Incredibly, he doesn’t really say that! Yes, Peter does give his eyewitness testimony of Jesus’ Transfiguration in **v. 16-18** of our text. But look again at Peter’s words in **v. 19**, **“We also have the completely reliable prophetic word...”** Now, most translations don’t bring it out very well, but in the Greek this verb is actually a *comparative*. So what Peter is actually saying is that **“we also have the prophetic word--more certain.”** Think of how incredible that statement is: Peter, an eyewitness to the transfiguration of Jesus, is telling us that we have something **“more certain”** than an eyewitness account! **“More certain”** than actually being there! Let that thought sink in for a moment... That **“more certain”** witness is, of course, **God’s Word**.

As Peter says in the first verse of our text, God’s Word is not a collection of **“cunningly devised fables.”** It is the testimony of eyewitnesses made **“more certain”** because the men who wrote them were inspired by God Himself. Peter goes on to say, **“since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ 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.” (v. 20-21)**. God’s Word is the greatest witness. It is the eternal unchanging truth. It is the complete revelation of God. It is absolutely dependable; we can stake our very lives and souls on it.

People can make claims and dream dreams. They can conjure up visions and prophecies and have their own “revelations.” But people can lie and deceive—and be deceived. Satan can lie and deceive. God’s Word will never lie! Any prophecy, revelation, or testimony that contradicts God’s Word, goes beyond God’s Word, or casts doubt on God’s Word is not from God! As Peter wrote, **“No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation.”** ²¹ **In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man” (v. 20b-21a).** True **“prophecy”** comes from God and is found in His Word. That is the rock-solid foundation, the ultimate eyewitness of all that God has done for our salvation. That is why Peter says of this 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” (v. 19).**

When God gave us the message of salvation through His Son Jesus He did not give us a collection of **“cunningly devised fables”** that were written hundreds of years after Jesus lived. He gave us thousands of years of accurate, detailed, God-inspired prophecies of His Son, the Christ, through His hand-picked prophets of the Old Testament. He gave us the multiple eyewitness accounts of the Gospels using men who were not only inspired by Him, but were also eyewitnesses of Jesus, who lived when He lived, and could have spoken with and had their reports confirmed by other eyewitnesses of Jesus.

Because we have the incredible, absolutely trustworthy eyewitness accounts of inspired men like **Peter** and the rest of the inspired writers of **God’s Word** one more group of eyewitnesses is made: **us!** That’s right, you and me! Now, it’s true none of us have seen Jesus’ brilliant glory with our physical eyes, like Peter. None of us have heard the voice of God the Father in a bright cloud like the three disciples on the mount of Transfiguration. But that doesn’t matter much. We have the **“more certain”** witness of God’s Word. Our eyes can be tricked, our ears can be deceived, but God’s Word is absolutely trustworthy and true. It has given us eyes of faith to see Jesus’ **“face shine like the sun, and His clothes become as white as the light” (Matthew 17:2 NKJV).** God’s Word has given us ears of faith to hear the voice of God the Father saying, **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.” (Matthew 17:5 EHV).** God’s Word has given us hearts of faith to pay attention to what God has told us **“as to a lamp shining in a dark place” (v. 19).**

This Wednesday night—Ash Wednesday—we will celebrate the beginning of another season of Lent. I invite you to join us as we are once again made witnesses of our salvation. Today we have witnessed Jesus’ radiant glory as true God. Now we will follow Him down His road of humiliation and suffering, even to His crucifixion on the cross. There we will be witnesses of the punishment our own sins deserved. We will witness Jesus, God’s own Son, forsaken by His Father and punished with the pains of hell so that we would never be. We will witness His glory again on Easter Sunday when we see the empty tomb, hear the angels proclaim, **“He is not here, He is risen!” (Matthew 28:6),** and see Jesus with His pierced hands and side standing alive in the midst of His disciples. It is because of Jesus’ work that we are made His eyewitnesses now, by faith. It is because of Jesus’ work that we will be made His eyewitnesses with our own glorified eyes in heaven, where we will **“see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).** What is that day going to be like?! Well, I guess you’ll have to be there! Amen.