

**March 6, 2011**  
**Transfiguration Sunday**

*"Jesus Shines in Glory to Anchor Your Faith"*

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**2 PETER 1:16-21**

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*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming 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 the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

*<sup>19</sup> And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, 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. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Have you ever been to Yosemite National Park and watched the rock climbers go up the face of El Capitan? How do they protect themselves if they should slip and fall as they are inching their way up the 3000 foot vertical rock face? As they go upward, they attach a rope to hooks they have pounded into the cracks of the rocks. If they should slip and fall, the strong rope attached to their body and to the hook will save them. Obviously it is important to have hooks or pitons that are firmly anchored in the rock. How foolish it would be to use a wooden stake such as this, or a plastic ten stake such as this to anchor yourself to the rock.

Peter is writing this letter to Christians who are in danger of letting go of Jesus and falling back into unbelief. In this letter he pleads with them to make their calling and election sure by clinging to Jesus and to the Word of God which has been given to them. He warns again false teachers with these words: "In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up."

On this Transfiguration Sunday we think of how Jesus allows us to see his glory to convince us beyond all doubt that our faith is anchored in the right place. We see this glory of Jesus shining brightly in the words of this book we call the Holy Bible. Through the words of the Bible which is God's Word we miraculously see Jesus' glory with eyes of faith just as Peter, James and John saw Jesus with their physical eyes.

**Jesus shines in glory on the mountain**

Peter never forgot that moment when he was with Jesus on that mountain and saw him shine in glory as his Lord and God. He writes, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." The Jewish people had their fantastic stories and legends about angels. The Greeks and Romans had their stories and legends about their gods. Native Americans have their legends about how the world was made when a large amount of mud fell off a giant turtle. Peter tells us he is not following cleverly invented stories when he tells us about what he saw in Jesus. With his own physical eyes he actually saw Jesus reveal his glory as God. In the gospel of Matthew we read, "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light."

The word used here for "change" is the word "metamorphoeo" from which we get the word metamorphosis. The teacher gathers with her students as the beautiful Monarch Butterfly emerges from the cocoon. It went through a metamorphosis or change. Jesus did not change from being the Son of Man to being the Son of God. He changed his outward appearance to reflect the glory he had as God from all eternity.

Peter also heard with his own ears the heavenly Father speaking from heaven. He writes, "For 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." Peter bore witness to what he saw and what he heard. He heard the majestic voice of God the Father pronounce his approval on the life that Jesus lived and the death he would die for our sins. Peter was so overwhelmed by what he had seen and heard he wanted that glorious moment to last forever. He said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters-one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

Dear Christian, take to heart what Peter tells you this morning. This really did happen as Peter says it did. Jesus did appear in glory and the Father did speak from heaven. The Savior whose blood was shed for your sin is Lord and God from all eternity. That makes what he did for you something reliable and trustworthy that will not fail you on judgment day. The Bible tells me the blood of Jesus' Christ his Son cleanses me from all sin. It says Jesus is God's Son. That makes his cleansing real, something that lasts, something that will not fail you. It is rock solid, not like a piece of plastic pounded into a rock, or a piece of wood.

To underscore why this appearance of Jesus on this mountain is so important for our faith, I would like to read to you from Hebrews 6:19 where it describes Jesus as a sure anchor for our faith. "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters into the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf." In the hymn we just sung it says, "My anchor holds within the veil." We think of anchors holding ships by being anchored in the rocks at the bottom of the sea. We think of anchors pounded into the rocks to hold the mountain climbers. Here it says our anchor holds behind the curtain or veil. Do you remember how the high priest went behind the curtain of the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Ark of the Covenant? It was a way of picturing how Jesus would go into the presence of God with his blood to pay for our sin. His atoning sacrifice in the presence of God is the sure anchor of faith and the anchor of our hope. The Father was pleased with the work that Jesus did of saving you and me. He was pleased because that was the life and that was the blood of his own Son, God from all eternity, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Why is what Peter saw on that mountain so important for your faith and mine? Picture yourself trying to climb up the face of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. How well would you do? If that were me, I would want to have an anchor that is sure, because I know that I would often be falling. How many times have you fallen this week? How many times have you failed your God and fallen short of his glory? I have to agree with the hymn writer who confessed, "Foul and full of sin I am. I am all unrighteousness." My only hope is Jesus, the solid anchor, the perfect sacrifice, the blood of God's own Son who lets me see his glory here and now along with Peter, James and John.

### **Jesus shines in glory in his Word**

To make us doubly sure that our anchor is solid, Peter points to the Old Testament promises about Jesus that all came true. "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the morning star rises in your hearts." How do I know for sure that I can trust Jesus what he has done to save me? I have the Old Testament prophets who said things about Jesus' life before they happened, and they all

came true. The prophets foretold the place Jesus would be born, not Jerusalem, but Bethlehem. The prophets foretold how Jesus would ride into Jerusalem, not on a war horse or chariot, but on a lowly donkey. The prophets foretold Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, and that is what the Jewish leaders paid Judas to betray him. The prophet Isaiah described in great detail how Jesus would be wounded for our transgressions and how the punishment for our peace would be upon him. Isaiah and King David predicted that Jesus would see light of life and be praised in the assembly after his resurrection to life again. Every single prophecy about Jesus' life and death and resurrection were fulfilled completely. That is huge reason to believe the Bible is true and to believe Jesus is a solid anchor for your faith.

What Peter says about the Old Testament prophets is true of the entire Bible. Jesus promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples to teach them all things and remember all the things he had said. Listen to Peter fervently defend how the Holy Spirit caused the words of the Bible to be written. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Have you ever listened to radio and television preachers who get carried away by their own ideas? Last Thursday, as I was driving down the 101, I was listening to a religious broadcast out of Oakland, California. A very old man is predicting that Jesus is going to rapture his church on May 21, and people are following his teaching. This is the same fellow that predicted the Lord would return in 1994. He even sent out free books to all the pastors in California. On May 22 if the world is still standing, we have every right as believers to label this man a false prophet and a liar for making predictions or prophecies that did not come true.

Don't you love these words of Peter? They are so clear. "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." "Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man." "Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." God speaks to us here in his Word just as Jesus spoke to his beloved disciples. It is such a privilege to gather together each week to listen to God's Word. It is such a privilege to take time to be in the Word of God, even if it is just a little each day. God gives us this promise in Isaiah 55: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out of my mouth; it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

God has given us his Word to keep us firmly anchored in Jesus. Satan will do everything in his power to get us hooked to things that will fail us and even destroy us. God's Word is more sure. It always takes us back to Jesus and lets us see his glory. John 20 says this about the words written in this book we love the Holy Bible. "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." With Peter we say to each other, "Lord it is good for us to be here." It is good to be in your Word that brings us Jesus shining in all of his glory. "Lord, help us see your glory in your Word until we see you face to face in the glory you have prepared for us." Amen.