

### More Certain.

***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. 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. 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. 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.***

You are sitting in the doctor's office. You notice he has his diploma up on the wall. Why is it there? Is he boasting? I don't think so. It is assurance that you are talking to a real doctor. He looked like one. The clinic says he is one. That diploma guarantees he is one. My chiropractor has a diploma on his wall. So does my barber. For hundreds of years, the church has always observed the transfiguration of Jesus the Sunday before Lent begins, and we see no reason to change. We need to see Jesus in his glory as God because during Lent we will see a lot of disturbing things. We will see many people reject him. We will see him abused, beaten and crucified. We will also dwell on our sins and what they truly demand. This will be a very somber time of the year for us. But on that mountain, Jesus is flashing his credentials for all of us to see. He is hanging his diploma on the wall so that, no matter what we feel or see, we know that Jesus is real. He is God. He is our Savior. That is the point Peter is making in our text. He uses the Transfiguration as proof so we can be more certain about Jesus.

#### *I. More certain because we have eyewitnesses.*

Do you watch "Ghosthunters?" Will you quit your job and dedicate your life to searching haunted houses? That is absurd. The Bible makes some very incredible claims. The Bible says that the dead will be raised in Christ. This contradicts the work of every pathologist and gravedigger in the world. The Bible says that God is triune, three persons but one God. This contradicts every mathematician in the world. The Bible says the world came into being by the word of God from absolutely nothing. Steven Hawkins disputed that when alive. The Bible claims that the human is corrupt and evil all the time and can't do a single good work. In other words, that sweet little old lady deserves hell as much as some terrible, heartless murderer. But it also claims that God took on flesh and blood to die for us and as a result God forgives our sins and gives us heaven as a gift. In other words, that cold-blooded murderer and that sweet little old lady will both go to heaven through faith in Christ. These are fantastic claims.

Peter was accused of making all of this up. So he defends himself. ***"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. 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."***

In the Old Testament, God said that nothing can be judged without two or three witnesses. The same thing is demanded in Matthew 18, you need two or three witnesses if disciplining a fellow member. Peter now calls witnesses to the stand to testify that Jesus is God. There is a reason Jesus took Peter, James and John to the top of that mountain, so they may serve as eyewitnesses. But they are not the only ones. There are many who witnessed Jesus do things only God can do when he healed the sick and made the lame walk, raised people from the dead and feed the 5000 and again the 4000. There were over 500 witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. There were Mary and the Emmaus disciples.

There is another witness, God the Father who said, ***"This is my son whom I love. With him I am well pleased."*** God the Father climbs the witness stand and testifies. "Yes, Jesus is God the Son, my Son. I love him and you will do well to listen to him." Peter wasn't making this up. Technically speaking, with all these witnesses, it is a slam-dunk case. We can be certain Jesus is who he says he is. He is God the Son.

#### *II. More certain because of God's Word.*

But Peter has one more witness. ***"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain."*** The only witness we ever need is God's Word. But how can we be so sure about a book that was written between 2000 and 3500 years ago? ***"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."*** The origin of the Mississippi River is Lake Itasca in Northern Minnesota. The origin of God's Word is God, not men. This means that the Word does not contain the Word of God; it is God's Word. It is true and without error for God is not a man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should break his promises.

That is why Peter didn't spend time describing how intense the glory was. He doesn't even mention Elijah or Moses. It is about the message, not the majesty. ***"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."*** When Peter tells us to pay attention to it, he is saying to hold tightly onto it. Peter saw the transfiguration light, but he doesn't tell us to hold onto that. He tells us to hold onto the Word of God. We will have our dark places and moments. And one day the shadow of death will darken the world around us. Hold tightly onto every promise and Word God has given you. It will be a light shining in a dark place.

And what does it promise? The day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. The day he is talking about here is "The Day" when Jesus returns. I saw a blurb, I think from the Sunday paper, that says, "Many people think you go to heaven when you die, but according to the N.T. Wright, professor of New Testament and early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews, that's not what the early Christians believed. "The point was not for us to go to heaven, but for the life of heaven to arrive on earth," he explains." Of course, we would love heaven to come to earth. That's why Peter wanted to build shelters. But how will this address the subject of sin or its wages, death? What about hell? Heaven on earth would do us no good. What would be good is what happened. Jesus came down that mountain to suffer and die as our Savior. With sins paid for, God forgives us. Then he will come back in all his "Mount Transfiguration" glory to take us where we will not have to build shelters. God gives us a shelter, a mansion not built by human hands, heaven itself. We can be more than certain of this. We have God's Word on it.

So we have this more certain Word. But do we treat it as more certain? A skydiver trusts that his parachute will open, otherwise he wouldn't jump out of a perfectly fine airplane. Yet, there is always a little doubt. What if there is something wrong with the parachute? Maybe the one who made it missed a stitch or the one who packed it folded it a little wrong. So he wears a back up chute just in case.

We believe the Bible. We do. But as weak humans, we also are plagued by doubts. So we start packing "emergency chutes" just in case. We know that God tells us not to worry about what we will eat or drink or wear. We believe this, but do we trust that promise? We must also confess a few bucks saved up will also help. Suddenly we strap on a back up chute, here a little money, just in case. How many emergency chutes do we wear? How many times we don't simply trust God, we must trust money, our own church attendance, how good we are and so on?

We can learn a lesson from Jesus. When the devil tempted him in the wilderness to change the stones into bread, that must have sounded appealing to a man weakened from forty days without food. But you must love Jesus' response. He quoted Deuteronomy on how man does not live on bread alone, but on every Word of God. Go back and read the context of that quote. It was about the Israelites and how they did not starve to death those forty years in the wilderness. God sent manna to feed them. But it wasn't the manna that saved them. It was God's Word, his promise that they will not starve, that saved them. The manna was just the means God used. Jesus told the devil he doesn't need to turn stone into bread. All he needed was God's Word and promise. When Jesus dies, it will be on the cross for the sins of the world and not in the desert from starvation. Jesus jumped out of the plane with the promise of God's Word; he didn't need a back up chute "just in case."

Friends, we believe God and his Word. Yet like the man who wondered if Jesus could heal his son, we must admit, "I believe. Help me overcome my unbelief." Trust God. You can jump out of plane without any back up chutes.

God's Word is "more certain." Actually, this is poor English. Certain is certain. Technically it cannot be any more certain. Yet that is how the text speaks. Peter is telling us that God's Word is more certain than being there and seeing Jesus' glory in person. Remember what Jesus said to Thomas. Blessed rather are those who have not seen and yet believe. We are more blessed than those who walked and talked with Jesus and saw his glory because we have this "most" certain Word of God. Remember that. Amen.