

The Sure Word, Part 1

2 Peter 1:16-18

61-14

We continue in our study tonight of 2 Peter chapter 1. And we have the great joy of coming to a marvelous text, seems to be our lot both in the morning hour and in the evening hour to be coming across great passages of Scripture.

Second Peter chapter 1 verses 16 to 21 is the text. And as always, as dutifully noted by Rick Holland, I have a hard time making one point, and sometimes only make half a point, and I want you to know, Rick, I will remember that you said that. I will also remember that it is true. But we're going to begin to approach this passage with hopes to at least get through verses 16 through 18.

The Bible has always had its detractors, and it always will. And some of them have been quite significant people by the world's standard. The Christian faith has through the centuries taken some hits broadside from some formidable cannons. Recently in his recommendations to the California Curriculum Commission, John Mason of the San Francisco Chapter of American Atheists gave the California Curriculum Commission a long list of quotes by famous thinkers of the past who were attacking Christianity. All of them were reacting to some form of western Christianity.

And he listed them to remind the California Curriculum Association that the elite, the intellectuals reject the Christian faith. He quoted Voltaire, the French philosopher who is alleged to have said, "Nothing can be more contrary to religion than reason and common sense." He quoted Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, who said, "Religion is a fraud but it must be maintained for the masses." He quoted Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet who wrote, "Every time we say that God is the author of some phenomenon that signifies that we are ignorant of how such a phenomenon was caused by the forces of nature." He quoted the French philosopher Auguste Comte, who said, "All good intellectuals have repeated since Bacon's time that there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts." He quoted John Stuart Mill, the British economist, who said, "God is a word to express not our ideas but the want of them." He quoted Benjamin Disraeli, the British prime minister, who said, "Where knowledge ends, religion begins." He quoted Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, who died in 1900, the German philosopher, who said, "People to whom their daily life appears too empty and monotonous easily grow religious. This is comprehensible and excusable. Only they have no right to demand religious sentiments from those whose daily life is not empty and monotonous." He quoted an early President of the United States by the name of John Adams who is alleged to have said, "This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it." He quoted Robert Ingersoll, who at the present day...he said, "Who at the present day can imagine the courage, the devotion to principle, the intellectual and moral grandeur it once required to be an infidel, to brave the church her racks, her faggots, her dungeons, her tongues of fire, to defy and scorn her heaven and her hell, her devil and her God."

He quoted one of the early women's liberationists, a woman by the name of Elizabeth Cady Stanton,

who said, "The Bible and the church have been the greatest stumbling block in the way of women's emancipation." He quoted the first president of Cornell University, Andrew Dixon White, who wrote, "The establishment of Christianity, beginning a new evolution of theology, arrested the normal development of the physical sciences for over 1500 years." He quoted Luther Burbank, "The idea," said Burbank, "that a good God would send people to burning hell is utterly damnable to me." He quoted Thomas Edison who said, "What does God mean to me? Not a damn thing. Religion is all bunk." He quoted Clarence Darrow, the lawyer, who said, "The origin of the absurd idea of immortal life is easy to discover. It is kept alive by hope and fear, by childish faith and by cowardice."

He quoted H.L. Mencken, who said, "I believe that religion generally speaking has been a curse to mankind, that its modest and greatly overestimated services on the ethical side have been more over-borne by the damage it has done to clear an honest thinking."

The endeavor of this gentleman amassing all these quotes was to show the intellectual stupidity of Christians. Is Christianity bunk? Is the Bible a book of lies? It is a book for fools? Is our faith a cursed and damaging thing? Does the church retard humanity from otherwise reaching its intellectual achievements? Or is this book the truth? Is it a sure word?

Peter is going to answer that question for us. Let's read our text. Second Peter chapter 1 verse 16, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty, for when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to him by the majestic glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.' And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the more sure word of prophecy to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

Peter's answer is very straightforward. We have a sure word, a true word. Peter is echoing what the psalmist said in Psalm 19 when he said, "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The testimony of the Lord, the psalmist intended to say, is trustworthy, it is reliable, you can place your life upon it. In Psalm 93 and verse 5, similarly the Scripture says, "Thy testimonies are fully confirmed." In Psalm 111 and verse 7 a similar testimony given again, "The works of His hands are truth and justice; all His precepts are sure."

The testimony of Scripture is that we have a sure word, a reliable word. Isaiah put it this way in chapter 55 and verse 3, "Incline your ear and come to Me, listen that you may live." We have a word of life. We have a word we can trust. Despite the broadsides that have come against Christianity and those who are tempted to debunk the Bible, it is true. I love what it says in Acts 13 verse 34, "And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure mercies of David," the sure mercies, the sure word, all saying that what God promises He will do. We have, therefore, says Paul to Timothy, a sure foundation, a sure foundation.

In this letter Peter is writing to Christians, Christians who are being tested. How? By the onslaught of false teachers. And what are these false teachers trying to do? Debunk the Christian faith. The same thing that people are trying to do today and have always tried to do, trying to discredit the Scripture.

They were likely not all atheists and neither were all those whom I quoted earlier. But they were satanic liars whose false religion was a kind of atheism because it denied the only true God and the Lord Jesus Christ. This congregation of people is being embattled, as it were, by these false teachers who are doing everything they can to discredit the Scripture.

In chapter 2, as we shall see in a matter of a few weeks, Peter describes these false teachers in very vivid terms. In fact his language is absolutely unforgettable. He calls them what they really are. Because he wants us to recognize them, he wants us to understand them for what they are, he wants all of his readers to know false teachers when they see them, and so chapter 2 is devoted to that description.

But withstanding their onslaught, even though you recognize them, is a matter which requires a defense of another kind. It is not enough to know who they are, you have to defend yourself against what they say. And so Peter is building in this epistle three lines of defense and they're all built around knowledge. Number one is the knowledge of your salvation. Number two is the knowledge of Scripture. And number three is the knowledge of sanctification.

In the first chapter, verses 1 to 11, he dealt with knowing your salvation because if you do not know your salvation, if you do not understand the gospel and are not assured of your salvation, you are easy prey for false teachers. In chapter 3 he will deal with the matter of sanctification because if you're not living a blameless, holy life, conducting yourself in obedience to Christ, you will be a prey for false teachers. And here in verses 16 to 21 he says the third line of defense is to know your Scripture. If you don't realize that you have in your hand a sure word and go to that word as your defense, you are again vulnerable. So the defense is set when you know your salvation, when you know your sanctification, when you know your Scripture.

Now we're looking at that element of Scripture. And in the future we'll look at the remaining one when we get to chapter 3 about sanctification. Next to knowing your spiritual condition, knowing your salvation, knowing you belong to God, Peter says you have to know your Scripture. You have to believe the Bible is a true word because if you're hit by error, where are you going to go to discover that it's error? How in the world could a person who doesn't believe in inerrant Scripture defend himself against error? What is the criteria? What is the basis for such a defense? If I'm not convinced that the Bible is unerringly the Word of God, then where do I go to defend myself? Do I pit my intellect against the intellect of a false teacher and leave it at that? On the other hand, if I know that this is a sure word, then whatever comes my way I can measure against its truth.

Peter has already indicated his concern for truth in verse 12. He was concerned that they be established in the present truth. He discussed, you remember, in verses 12 to 15 his zeal to remind them of the truth so they would never forget it. And here he moves a step further to the source of that truth, which is a sure word.

Peter's passion here is that his people would know the truth. He says as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, verse 13, I'm going to continue to remind you of the truth. And I'm going to keep on reminding you of it and I'm going to write it down, verse 15, so that even after I'm gone you'll have it.

Now the question would arise at this point to a reader, "Well that's fine, Peter, I'm glad you're zealous

for the truth, but how are we to know that what you write is true? How are we to know that what other apostles write is true? How are we to know what the prophets in the Old Testament wrote was true? How are we to know we have a true word? There are a lot of voices, there are a lot of opinions, there are a lot of religions, there are a lot of teachers? Who do we believe and why?"

To that Peter replies in the text I just read to you. He says I'm no false teacher. Number one, I'm an eyewitness. What is he saying? He's saying the word you have is the word of eyewitnesses. This is not second-hand material. Secondly, the Scripture does not give you human wisdom; it gives you divinely inspired truth as the Spirit of God moved men to write it. So you have a sure word on two accounts. You have eyewitnesses who wrote it, and you have the Spirit of God who inspired it as it was written.

Two lines of verification, let's call them supernatural experience and supernatural revelation, supernatural experience and supernatural revelation. Supernatural experience is in verses 16 to 18, supernatural revelation verses 19 to 21. And together those two strands tie an unbreakable knot around a sure word.

Now for tonight, let's look at this matter of the supernatural experience. In verses 16 to 18 Peter accredits himself by virtue of his experience. In verse 16 he says, "Look, this is not something that came down the philosophical pike, this is not something I picked up in some mythology, this is an eyewitness account. What I say to you and what I teach you I am an eyewitness of firsthand." And so as he begins to lay the bedrock of trust in what he taught, he refers to his supernatural experience.

Now let's begin in verse 16 and see what he says. "For," and, of course, that little word connects with the prior text, verses 12 to 15, the reason Peter teaches them what he does, the reason he reminds them and reminds them and reminds them until death and even afterwards by the letters he's writing is because he's absolutely sure that what he teaches is true for, he says, "We were eyewitnesses." You could take the word "for" and make it "because" and you'd have the idea.

In his own experience, he says, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales." Now the "we" here embraces the other apostles. He's speaking in a collective sense of himself and the other writers of the New Testament. Collectively, he says, all of us have experienced supernatural reality. We have all had personal verification from God Himself of the truth we teach.

That verb "did not follow," you see it there in verse 16, "For we did not follow," can mean to rest upon. For either our confidence or our doctrine we do not rest upon cleverly devised fables. Peter is saying for what we believe and for what we teach and for what we write we do not rest on cleverly devised tales, or fables.

Now this very likely reflects the accusation. Probably Peter was being accused of simply teaching cleverly devised tales to get people to follow him so he could make money on them, which was always the ploy of false prophets, so he could gain sexual favors from the women in the group, so he could amass power, prestige, popularity, prominence and all the stuff that goes with it. There were undoubtedly false teachers in endeavoring to debunk Peter and the other apostles and Scripture who were saying they are only following cleverly devised fables meant to deceive you, to con you.

Now what does this phrase "cleverly devised tales" mean? Well "cleverly devised" simply means

“subtly concocted.” It's a clandestine thing, it's a deceptive thing. One writer suggests that this was an epithet cast at a quack doctor. It is intended to deceive. It is cleverly devised to get your money, to have you follow someone, to gain from you whatever it is that they want. And, beloved, that is the ploy, that was the ploy, that will be the ploy of false teachers. They are after you. They dress up as if they were prophets for the purpose of devouring the sheep.

The word "tales" there is *muthos* from which we get myths, a word used to refer to mythical stories about gods and creation and miraculous events and so forth. Peter says, look, we don't rest for our doctrine and our belief on subtly concocted myths designed to deceive you. The implication is, like the false teachers who accuse of that. False teachers obviously in order to have what they teach believed have to destroy what the others teach. And so in the attempt to destroy people's trust in the Christian faith, they label the Christian faith as a book of myths and a book of fables. This is so successful that there are even Protestant theologians in years past who felt it was their task to demythologize the Bible.

I'll never forget in seminary reading about one German theologian who when he was finished taking all the myths out of the Bible came up with twenty-seven remaining verses. The truth is, Peter says, we didn't follow any of that and anybody who denies the Bible is following it. The truth is that everybody outside the teaching of the Bible is involved in a subtly concocted myth and it wasn't designed by men it was designed by seducing spirits because it is a demon doctrine.

By the way, Paul uses the word *muthos* as Peter does. And Paul uses it for the lies of all false teachers. You start in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 4, chapter 4 verse 7, go to 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:4, go to Titus, all three of the pastorals, Titus 1:14, in all of those letters Paul uses the word myth to describe the essence of the lies of false teachers, fabrications, deceptions.

Paul and Peter would agree neither of them has been teaching sophisticated myths and fables to gain money and power. Peter is saying, "When I speak to you of salvation and the gospel," as he had earlier in chapter 1, "when I speak to you about the assurance of salvation, when I speak to you about the hope of eternal glory and the coming of Jesus Christ, those are not embellished tales without reality. They're true." And the first evidence he gives is because "I was an eyewitness, I was an eyewitness."

Go back to verse 16. "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you..." I've got to stop and comment about this phrase, I can't let it go by. The word "known" here, it's a word *gnōrizō*, appears many times in the New Testament. I don't have the time to take you through all of its uses, but it is frequently used, mark this, as a technical term for imparting a new revelation. It is a technical term for imparting a new revelation in a number of passages. It is important to note that because that, I believe, is how Peter intends to use it here.

One comes to mind, for example, Luke 2:15, it says, "The shepherds said let us go straight to Bethlehem then and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." There it is used again of a new revelation. What revelation? That Messiah is born in Bethlehem. It is so used in John's gospel a couple of times, in Romans, Ephesians, Colossians.

So Peter says when we gave you God's Word, when we gave you new revelation, when we opened up divine mystery, which means something hidden now revealed, this was not some cleverly

concocted myth.

You say, "Well what specifically is he talking about?" The end of verse 16, toward the end: "When we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now could it be that the false teachers had come and not only attempted to debunk Peter in general and to debunk the New Testament revelation that had been given and certainly the Old Testament revelation as well, but particularly they were after this issue of Christ's Second Coming. We believe that's the case. We believe that the major concern of these false teachers was to deny the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, which, of course, is the culmination to everything. If Christ doesn't come back, then all the rest is meaningless, right? It's all meaningless. If He isn't the end of history and the beginning of eternity, then the rest is a moot point.

And so the false teachers apparently were attacking this teaching on the coming of Christ, the Second Coming, which is typical of false teachers. And they were saying, "Well when Peter and the apostles are telling you about the coming of Christ, this is a cleverly concocted fable to get out of you your money and whatever else they want." Peter denies it. Not so, we didn't follow that when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a denial of the Second Coming that concerned him.

To affirm that in your mind, look at chapter 3 for a moment, chapter 3 verse 3. Peter here indicates that he's not really surprised by this because, he says, "In the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, 'Where is the promise of His (what?) of His coming?'" Mockers in the last days will deny the return of Christ. Where is He, they will say, where is He? Why forever since the fathers fell asleep all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation. Nothing has ever changed. They're saying Jesus has never come so He never will, which is like saying I've never died so I never will. But there you note there was a denial of the Second Coming. It seems to have been the major issue of these false teachers.

And so, Peter says when we tell you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, we're not giving you a fable, we're giving you the truth. Just a word about that phrase, "the power and coming," there's one article there in the original, which means that both power and coming are sort of embraced by that one article. The powerful coming, the mighty coming, the coming in power, the coming with might, that's the idea. This couldn't be a description of His first coming, could it? In His first coming He didn't come with power, He came with humility, right? He came almost impotently, born as a helpless little baby, humiliated until He was finally executed. But the day is coming when He will come in power, *dunamis*, dynamite. Matthew 24 describes His coming in power and glory. Mark 9, Mark 13, Mark 14, Mark tells about His coming in power, full power, a display of inexhaustible might.

That word "coming," by the way, is the word *parousia*. Mark this, it means not only to arrive but to be present alongside, to arrive and to be present alongside. It's used of the arrival in secular Greek of the arrival of a king who comes and stays. When we say Jesus is coming, He's coming to stay. It's like 1 Thessalonians, when He comes to gather his pe...gather His people, it says, "so shall we ever be with the Lord." He is coming and He will abide with His people. This word, *parousia*, when used of Jesus Christ in the New Testament always refers to His Second Coming. Some commentators have thought that Peter was talking about His first coming, that He's talking about when we preached to you the gospel. But in His first coming He didn't come with power. And the *parousia* becomes such a technical term. Whenever it's used of Christ it always refers to the Second Coming in all other

passages, so we assume he must be referring to the Second Coming here, particularly in light of chapter 3 where the major issue seems to be a denial of His Second Coming.

So when you're reading your New Testament and you read in Matthew 24 four times the word "coming," it always means His Second Coming. And when you read in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 23 about them that are His at His coming, it means His Second Coming. And when you read in 1 Thessalonians four different times about His coming, it's always His Second Coming; same in 2 Thessalonians, same in James 5 where James reminds the people who are under persecution not to be distressed but to wait for His coming. And even John anticipates that in 1 John 2:28.

So Peter says, "Look, when I told you about the Second Coming, when I told you the Lord was coming back, along with the other apostles who have spoken and written about that, I was not giving you some subtly concocted myth."

You say, "Now wait a minute, as Peter is writing to these people had he already told them about the Second Coming?" Absolutely. Go back to the first letter he wrote. First Peter chapter 1 verse 7, he talks about "the proof of your faith being more precious than gold, which is perishable even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at (the what?) the revelation of Jesus Christ." There he uses not the word "coming," but speaks of the same event, the *apocalypsis*, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. And down again in verse 13, "Gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." And again he has in mind His unveiling at His coming.

Over in chapter 4 of 1 Peter and verse 13, again he reminds them that they can keep on rejoicing even in suffering so that at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exaltation. In chapter 5 verse 4 he said, "When the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory." Down in verse 10 he said, "God has called you to His eternal glory in Christ." Yes, he had taught them through that letter and perhaps they had been taught by the other apostles as well about the coming of the Lord Jesus. And Peter says when we told you that, it was true, it is true. It wasn't any fable.

How do we know that, Peter? The end of verse 16: "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Wait a minute, what does this mean? Well we have to follow this. Peter says we gave you firsthand reports. You say, "Now wait a minute, Peter, how could you give a firsthand report of the Second Coming?" It's a fair question, isn't it? Since it hasn't happened, how could you do that? What do you mean you were eyewitnesses of His majesty, the implication, the kind of majesty related to the majesty displayed when He returns? By the way, he uses "we" again, and here he is embracing the other apostles.

Now there's a sense in which all of the apostles had been eyewitnesses of His majesty in some degree. They had all seen His life. They had all witnessed His death. They had all witnessed His resurrection. If they hadn't witnessed His resurrection they couldn't be an apostle, right? They had all been there on the mount when He ascended, the eleven had. So they had seen the majesty of His life and His miracles and His miraculous words. They had seen the majesty of His death, at least though they were not eyewitnesses standing at the foot of the cross they were witness to the reality that it all occurred. They saw the majesty of His resurrection for He met them in His glorified, resurrected body, post-tomb. They had seen the majesty of His ascension when He was caught up in the clouds and taken into glory. Yes, they were eyewitnesses of His majesty. And so when the

writers of the New Testament write that Jesus was majestic, not secondhand stuff, firsthand. They were eyewitnesses.

Peter's implication is false teachers make claims but they weren't eyewitnesses. False teachers may deny all this. Were they there? The burden of proof is not on Peter, beloved, and Paul and John and James and so forth, who have seen the risen Christ, and Paul had seen the risen Christ, personal visits on four occasions. The burden of proof is not on the eyewitnesses, the burden of proof is on the people who attempt to discredit the eyewitnesses who weren't eyewitnesses, right? This is the record of eyewitnesses. Peter says we were eyewitnesses. That's a great word, great word. It originally meant in a general sense, an observer or a spectator. But the word *epoptēs* came to have a technical meaning. Listen to this. In the Greek usage of Peter's day this was a technical word. We've already spoken many times, and you've heard me, about the mystery religions. Well these mystery religions were all designed of a nature that called for ascending ladders of consciousness of deity. People were always trying to get elevated up the chain, as it were, or up the ladder to have a greater and greater level of communion with deity. And after lots of instruction as sort of novices and lots of preparation, the worshiper would be elevated from one level to the next level to the next level.

Very often this was as simple as attending a series of plays. And each play would reveal another truth about the supposed deity that was worshiped in the system. And as you sort of were in the religion for a while you would go from play to play to play and you'd start accumulating these higher and higher levels of perception about deity. And finally you would reach the play which would somehow fuse you with the divine mind. And when you reached that fusion with the divine mind, the technical word to describe you would be this very word *epoptēs*. You are prepared and privileged as an eyewitness who has communed with the deity.

So the word was commonly used in the mystic cults to delineate those who had reached the inner circle of mystical privilege, who had become the high-level initiates. Peter is saying. Look, we're the high-level initiates, we were eyewitnesses of the majesty of the Second Coming Christ. Wow! We were privileged spectators who reached the highest level of supernatural experience.

And what did they observe? Verse 16 says they observed His majesty. Literally it says in the Greek, "That One's majesty." What one? It modifies the Lord Jesus Christ. That One's majesty. The word "majesty" is almost a untranslatable word, *megaleiotēs*. You understand mega, right? Splendor, grandeur. Luke 9:43 it's used of God, majesty, glory, grandeur, splendor. Well listen, in the first coming of Jesus was there majesty, glory, splendor, grandeur? No. Humiliation, yes.

Well now wait a minute. Peter says we saw His splendor, His Second Coming glory. Go with me, for a moment, to Matthew chapter 16, let me show you something. Jesus said they would do this. Jesus predicted this would happen. In the last verse of Matthew 16 listen to what Jesus said, Matthew 16:28, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." What a statement. There are some of you standing here who won't die until you see the Son of Man in kingdom splendor in coming glory? Amazing, astounding.

He says that to the disciples. What's He talking about? Is He talking about post-resurrection when He appeared to them? Is He talking about the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came in power? Is He talking about the destruction of Jerusalem where they never really saw Christ but they saw, of course, what He designed for sinful, rejecting Israel? What's He talking about? When were they

going to see the Son of Man come in a display of royal majesty before some of them even died?

Let's go back to our text in 2 Peter and listen as Peter further describes this amazing event. He further describes it by saying, verse 17, "For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to him by the majestic glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased,' and we ourselves heard this utterance." Stop at that point.

Peter says we were *epoptēs*, we were the highest level initiates to experience fellowship with the glorified Christ in the majesty that attends His Second Coming. And it was at a time, he says, when He received honor and glory from God the Father. Whatever event Peter's talking about, whatever he's remembering, God was there. And God gave glory and honor to Jesus. Honor means exalted status, glory means radiant splendor. One identifies Him in His person, the other identifies Him in the effulgence of His person.

When was this? When did He receive glory and honor from God the Father? Well it was at a time when such an utterance as this was made to him by the majestic glory. What does he mean by that? It was at a time when God spoke such an utterance, a verbal message, an announcement, a proclamation. An audible saying was made by the majestic glory.

That term "majestic glory," I wish we had time to dig into that a little bit, but it's used in the Septuagint in Deuteronomy 33:26 and it's just a substitute name for God. You remember the Jews refused to say the name of God, right? They did not say the name of God and so they had many substitutes for the name of God and one of the most beautiful was they called Him "The Majestic Glory," *megaleiotēs*. There's another *mega* word indicating splendor and grandeur and glory and majesty, *mega*. The Jews used this as a substitute for the name of God. So Peter says we saw His *mega* glory. When was that? Well it was when the Father gave honor and glory to the Son by verbally speaking. They heard a voice from the majestic glory Himself, magnificent, majestic, sublime God, *doxa* from which we get doxology, glory, the glory spoke, God spoke. And what did God say? God said, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."

Peter says when we talk about the Second Coming we're not talking about some concocted fable, we're eyewitnesses of it. When was it, Peter? Well it was when God gave honor and glory to Jesus. Well what do you mean? Well it was when God spoke. When the majestic glory in an audible voice said, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." That narrows it down, doesn't it? That narrows it down to three potential events. God said that at the baptism of Christ, God said...that's in Matthew 3:16 and 17, God said it during the Passion Week in John 12 verse 28, "This is My beloved Son." Those are two of the times, but those aren't the time Peter had in mind because Peter tells us which time in verse 18. "And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him" not at the Jordan River and not during Passion Week in the city but on the what? Holy mountain.

By the way, as a footnote, if you're wondering what it meant when the Father said, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased," you can go back into my Matthew commentary and look up the passages where He said it and read the fullness of it, but the statement basically means, "This is One in essence with Me," and the Father is affirming the deity of the Son, something that He does repeatedly in the New Testament. So Peter says, when we write to you about Jesus Christ we were eyewitnesses, high-level initiates, as it were, communing with the living God and hearing His very voice out of heaven as the majestic glory affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ and gave Him honor

and glory. And when the Father says this is My beloved Son, He speaks of divine essence. When the Father says this is My beloved Son He speaks of divine love. When the Father says this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased He speaks of divine approval, divine essence, divine love, divine approval.

So the majestic, glorious Father God in one statement, listen to this, in one statement established the unity of the human and divine natures in Christ, established the perfect love bond in the Trinity, because Jesus is sinless and therefore a holy God and a sinless Christ can be one in essence. He also established His complete satisfaction with everything Jesus said and did and thought because in Him He was well pleased. Here is God the Father affirming the deity of Christ, affirming the humanity of Christ, affirming the sinlessness of Christ, and affirming the perfection of Christ's work, magnanimous statement by God who can say such massive profundity in such an economy of words. And thus did the Father set the stage for His right to return for He was God and He had perfectly accomplished His redemptive work and He was pure and sinless and He was worthy to come again and receive those who were His and take over what rightfully belonged to Him. Peter says we were there, we were there. We ourselves, plural, he wasn't alone, heard this utterance made from heaven. When was it? When we were with Him in the holy mount.

That mountain wasn't holy before this event but it was holy afterwards. Let's just remind ourselves as we close of that event, Matthew 17, Matthew 17. We know this as the transfiguration. In the end of verse...in the end of chapter 16, and just follow along for another five minutes, and this will pull together in great, joyful comprehension in your heart. Jesus said some of you are...are going to live to see Me in My glory. And, boy, He wasn't kidding, verse 1 of 17, six days later. Six days later? That is quick. By the way, Luke says eight days. You say, "Is that a contradiction?" No, Luke just included the day on each end and Matthew just the intervening days, just two different ways of looking at it. Six days later, or if you count the day He said it and the day it happened, a total of eight. Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, his brother, and brought them to just a high mountain that would soon become a holy mountain.

You say, "Why did He take those three?" Well they were the most well-known, reliable witnesses and you only needed how many witnesses to confirm something? Two or three. They were the most intimate with Jesus, they knew Him the best, they were with Him the most, they understood Him and they were the spokesmen. They were the verbalizers among the twelve. They were the ones who were the leaders, the most respected and could best articulate the event. We know that. John was a great, great verbalizer. He wrote the gospel of John, three epistles and the book of Revelation. Peter was a great verbalizer, too. You couldn't shut him up. And James became the leader of the church.

And so, typically, Luke 9 says they all went up to the mountain and they all fell asleep till the action started. Verse 2, Jesus was transfigured before them. What does that mean? [??] *Metamorphoo*, metamorphosis, just means He was changed into another form. You say, "What was it?" I don't know, changed into another form. Here is a description. "His face shone like the sun." Now it would be one thing to say He had a shiny face, we can identify with that, but to say it shone like the sun, blazing brilliance. When John wrote in John 1, "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten, full of grace and truth," he saw the glory of Jesus Christ somehow transferred into incandescent, radiant light. He was the brightness of the Father, the express image of His person, the transcendent glory, the *Shekinah* blazed out of His face. It defies understanding, it defies description. The inspired writer could only say His face shone like the sun, and leave it at that. "And His garments became bright as light." I'll tell you one thing they knew, they knew this was no

ordinary, fill in the blank, man. They knew they were seeing a supernatural being, splendorously revealed. Because He was radiant on the inside, the radiance began to show through His garments. Did you ever put a flashlight behind a piece of material? Well imagine that the sun blazing through that material would be similar. This was their experience.

And it got better, verse 3, Moses and Elijah showed up, unbelievable, talking with Him. There are Moses and Elijah talking with the Lord. What are they talking about? Well they're talking about His death. Luke tells us, chapter 9 verse 31, they were having a conversation with Jesus about His departure. Two from the Old Testament... Why those two? Because of the law and the what? The prophets. They represented the law and the prophets, Moses the great lawgiver, Elijah the great proclaimer of the truth of the law. Now here's some more witnesses, here some more confirming testimony, here's the whole Old Testament tied in to this thing. This is deity, this is Jesus Christ, essence the same as God, in love with the Father in a perfect love, having completed the Father's work with absolute perfection and holiness and God is totally satisfied. This person begins to radiate the very glory of a divine being and here come Moses and Elijah to give testimony that this is the One of whom we wrote and spoke. And they're having a conversation with Him like they know Him and they do know Him because they've been with Him for a long time.

Peter just thinks this is so good. He can't stand it. So he says to Jesus, I'm sure interrupting this process, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." And that's the understatement of all time. He says, "If You wish, I will build three tabernacles here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah."

What are you saying, Peter? Let's make this permanent. Tabernacle means a dwelling place. I'm going to build some houses here. Peter was a doer. There were no committees in his life, none at all. He wants to make the fellowship permanent. This is it, this has got to be kingdom glory, let's just put this one together, we'll all live here. That's it.

No, that wasn't the plan. Jesus must die, He must finish His mission. Moses and Elijah must leave after giving this personal confirmation of Old Testament testimony, after affirming Jesus was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. So they left. They disappeared. And Jesus is there in unchallenged supremacy.

Verse 5 says, "While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud saying, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.'" And then the Father added what Peter didn't record, "Listen to Him."

"While Peter was still speaking," you could put that into a lot of chapters in the New Testament because that probably happened frequently, God interrupted him. Now if you're going to be interrupted, it's not bad to be interrupted by God, God in a bright cloud and a voice out of that cloud. You have the testimony of Moses, you have the testimony of Elijah, now would you like the testimony of God? "My Son will tell you He will suffer and die, believe Him. He will tell you He will rise again, believe Him. If He tells you He will come again in glory, believe Him." That's all implied in the statement "listen to Him." And verse 6 says, "And when the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and they were much afraid." They were traumatized, devastated, shattered, frightened out of their minds. Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise and do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone." It was over.

You think they ever forgot it? No, not hardly, not hardly, not hardly. And He says, "When you go down the hill don't tell anybody, don't tell anybody." Why? Well we don't want the people to think He came in splendor to conquer Rome. He came to conquer death. What you saw today isn't for now, it's not for His first coming, it's for His what? Second Coming.

Yes, they saw Christ in glory and splendor, they saw Moses in glory representing the law and representing those who had died. They saw Elijah in glory representing the prophets and representing those who never died, for Elijah was translated. They saw a miniature picture of kingdom glory, the kingdom where the Old Testament saints will be and where the New Testament saints will be, Peter, James and John. And there even was the multitude way down below, like the nations will be in the kingdom. Christ will be resplendent, the saints will be gathered around Him, Old and New, the nations at His feet. Wow! That was a kingdom preview.

So Peter says, "Look, when I tell you about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, I am not giving you some concocted, deceptive myth, I am telling you what I personally experienced." Beloved, when you open the pages of Scripture, you are hearing eyewitness accounts, eyewitness accounts.

Is this a sure word? Peter had enough evidence. Moses affirmed Christ. Elijah affirmed Christ. More than that, God Himself affirmed Christ. Peter was there.

Well that's half his point, but it's time to pray.

Thank You, Father, for this good word to us tonight. What hope it gives, what joy, to trust the sure word and the sure hope in our Savior's name. Amen.

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