

Review

Simon Peter has begun this second letter to Christians by reminding us to be diligent to continue moving forward in our faith, not stumbling or moving backwards. In the verses we're covering today, he's going to remind us about the reality of the One in whom we have put our faith.

1:16-18 Cleverly Devised Tales?

People who doubt the Bible almost always fall back to the same argument: "It's fiction. These are just stories. There were no miracles and no healings. And if a man named Jesus ever existed, he certainly didn't rise from the dead."

For some of us, it's hard to argue with that. After all, we never saw Lazarus raised from the dead. We never saw a man blind from birth receive his sight. We never saw Jesus walking on this earth, much less saw Jesus in His glory. But Peter did. He was an eyewitness to almost all of these things.

And the event that really stood out to him was what we call "the Mount of Transfiguration."

See The Kingdom

Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9 all tell us of this amazing event, which was actually preceded with a promise. Jesus told the disciples,

Matt. 16:28 "...there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Three of those disciples were going to get a glimpse of the kingdom of God. And it would happen in just six days...

On A High Mountain

Six days after making that statement, Jesus decided to invite three of his disciples to a prayer meeting on top of a high mountain. He took Peter, James, and John with Him as they hiked up to the top. It is believed that Mount Hermon was that high mountain, since they had been in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Mt. Hermon is on the north border of

the Golan Heights and rises to a peak of over 9,000 feet.

Overcome With Sleep

Once at the top, Jesus started praying, but Peter, James, and John started snoozing. You can hardly blame them. After all, I'm sure you can imagine that after hiking up such a high mountain, the guys were exhausted. Luke tells us that the three of them were "overcome with sleep."

Transfigured

While Jesus was praying, He was transfigured. The Greek word is "**met-am-or-FO-o**," where we get our word "metamorphosis." This is a term that describes a physical change in form. Like the metamorphosis from a caterpillar into a butterfly, or a polliwog into a frog.

Jesus' physical and mysterious transformation consisted of a radical change in His face and clothing. His face is described as becoming different and shining like the sun. His garments also shone - white as light - radiant, gleaming. Beyond what any bleach could ever do (Mark 9:3).

Moses And Elijah

Then, something else amazing happened: Moses and Elijah appeared, talking with Jesus! They appeared in glory, shining like Jesus was. And the conversation was far from small talk. In fact, Luke tells us that they...

Luke 9:31 ...were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

In other words, His impending crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. This is interesting to me, because in what Jesus was about to do, He was fulfilling the ministries of Moses and Elijah. After all, Moses was the great giver of the law, and Elijah was the first and greatest of the prophets. And Jesus had said,

Matt. 5:17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."

Moses and Elijah weren't surprised by this, either. They had been

expecting this for a long time. They had written of Jesus many generations before. Remember that Philip told Nathanael,

John 1:45 ...“We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

They had written of Jesus, and what He would do. Jesus would later tell the disciples,

Luke 24:44 "...all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Eyewitnesses Of His Majesty

At this point, the disciples woke up. When they saw Jesus in His glorified, transfigured state, they became terrified. To make matters worse, the three of them recognized Moses and Elijah there. What would you think if you awakened from sleep, only to see famous dead people? I'd probably come to the conclusion that I'd had a heart attack climbing this mountain, and now I'm dead! They were shaking in their shoes!

But they weren't too terrified to realize that something had happened to Jesus. This is why John could later write,

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Peter Speaks

When the disciples woke up, Moses and Elijah turned to leave (Luke 9:33). Now, if you're familiar with these specific disciples, then you've already guessed what happens next: Peter says something dumb.

I have found that there are two kinds of people in this world - those who have something to say, and those who have to say something. Peter almost always fell into the latter category. Here's some free advice from King Solomon:

Prov. 10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

Peter didn't restrain his lips. Before Moses and Elijah left, he spoke up and told Jesus,

Mark 9:5 Peter *said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

You can understand Peter's motivation. He's hanging out on the mountaintop with Moses, Elijah, and Jesus! Who wouldn't want that to last? Who wouldn't want to fellowship with them as long as possible? Poor Peter didn't realize what He was saying (Luke 9:33), but God did, and dealt with it immediately.

A Cloud And A Voice

At that moment, a bright cloud formed. The disciples became even more afraid as the cloud increased in size and enveloped them, overshadowing them. Suddenly, a voice came out of the cloud. It was the voice of God saying, “This is My beloved Son, My Chosen One, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35).

Peter later wrote,

2Pet. 1:17-18 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.

This wasn't just an "attaboy" statement for Jesus. It was a rebuke for Peter. You see, by saying what he did, he was making Moses and Elijah equivalent to Jesus. God was saying that honor and glory belong to Jesus alone. Because Jesus is not a contemporary of Moses and Elijah - He is the Creator of Moses and Elijah. Moses the lawgiver of God, and Elijah the prophet of God, must not be viewed as equal to Jesus the Son of God.

As dumb as what Peter said sounds to us, many Christians are really guilty of doing the same thing. God wants us focused on Jesus alone, but some look at the Law and the Prophets and say, "Let's have all

of them!"

They want Moses: ordinances and observances to make our outward appearance more righteous. Imposing rigid requirements and repeating rituals to make "better Christians" out of us.

They want Elijah: the miracle workers who speak for God, telling us what He said instead of listening to Him ourselves.

But Paul rebuked this position:

Rom. 3:21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets

Moses and Elijah were pointing to Jesus, so let's not try to point to them. God tells us that we need Jesus alone. Jesus will lead us to righteousness. Jesus will be our mediator to the Father. Jesus alone must be our focus.

Jesus Alone

Upon hearing this voice, the disciples fell face-down on the ground and were terrified.

Matt. 17:7-8 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

Saints, this is also where we need to be. Seeing Jesus alone. So let's do as the Father says, and "listen to Him!"