

Text: 2 Peter 1:16-21 Transfiguration. **March 2, 2014.**

Grace and peace are yours through our glorious Savior, Jesus. Amen.

When you are in a courtroom, what evidence matters? I have been to courtrooms to support friends. I never want to have to go back. It's a scary place. One lawyer says one thing. The other objects. You don't know who's right. One witness comes up and says, "He did it. I saw him." That person stands up and says, "That never happened. It wasn't me." They have signed statements and affidavits saying contradictory things. Who knows? What evidence matters?

Peter, the man whom God used to write this letter, lived in a time much like ours. There were lots of stories going around. The dominant Greek culture had myths about their gods for centuries. Most Greek people still know them today. To this culture so full of myths, cleverly devised stories, a man who was God fit right in, along with all the other stories. Many people considered and even accused the Christians of making up another story to add to the mix, but the Christian story had the most unbelievable ending. This guy rose from the dead? Come on. Nice story.

What evidence does it take to convince someone raised in a culture of myths and cleverly devised stories? What about an eyewitness? Is that reliable evidence? Usually in a courtroom an eyewitness is pretty reliable. And here's Peter, eyewitness number one. Peter says, "I was standing there! I am an eyewitness! I am an eyewitness of his majesty. I saw this glory like I had never seen before. I saw clothes whiter than anyone could bleach them. I saw a face as bright as the light. I saw Moses and Elijah chatting with Jesus. Man, I was scared. I was so frightened I didn't know what to say, but I'm the guy who always says something, so I said something stupid. But I saw. It was real." And according to the best records, Peter died for what he saw, crucified upside down!

What makes a person so sure, that he is willing to be crucified upside down? What evidence convinced Peter? Peter not only was an eyewitness. Peter was an earwitness. Peter not only saw the majesty, the glory the whiter than light clothes. Peter heard the voice from the Majestic Glory. A voice from heaven itself! Would that evidence matter, from an eye and earwitness? A voice from the Majestic Glory? This word for majestic is used only one place in the whole New Testament, right here! It's like Peter doesn't have enough words to describe the glory. Peter doesn't have big enough words for the big majesty he saw, the voice from the Majestic Glory he heard.

And wow! What he heard! This is my son, my beloved, with him I am well pleased. The Majestic Glory can only be pleased with holiness. Only perfection meets his perfect standard. Jesus was more than a man who became God. Jesus was the God, who became a man, always perfect, always holy, never sinning, not once!

Does that evidence matter? Is an eye and earwitness reliable? Well, maybe if I had seen it. But I didn't. I wasn't there on that holy mountain. I didn't hear that voice from the Majestic Glory. All God ever lets me see is a guy in a white gown, talking at me in an outdated mode of communication. He tells me some magic water washed away my sins. He gives me some stale bread and tells me I have seen Jesus. I swallow one gulp of wine and he tells me, "your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." Really? That's as close as I get to Jesus? What evidence do I have? What evidence matters?

Allow Peter to present exhibit two: the prophetic message. God put it down in black and white. Maybe an eyewitness seems unreliable. Maybe he was hallucinating. Maybe he wanted to see something so badly, he saw it. Maybe a cleverly devised story will get him a big following. But what if God put his message down in black and white? Would that evidence matter? Would that be good enough for you?

Don't feel bad if you want it in writing. Peter himself calls the prophetic message and he's talking about the Old Testament Bible, completely reliable. Actually Peter says the prophetic message is even more reliable than an eyewitness. The prophetic message spans hundreds of years. The prophetic message involves many people, most of whom got no fame, no glory, no big following for themselves. They lived in caves and holes in the ground. They went around in sheepskins and goatskins. They were persecuted, and even sawed in two. The world was not worthy of them. But their message, oh, their message! Their message has stood for thousands of years. Their message has changed the lives of billions of people. Their message is still proclaimed all over the world today. If people call you by one name, you are famous, like LeBron, Barak. Think of all the one name prophets. Isaiah. Jeremiah. Daniel. Ezekiel. Malachi. Their message is completely reliable. Their message is more reliable even than eyewitnesses. Their message is the evidence that matters.

So you will do well to pay attention to that message. Think about it. That message is from God. That message is evidence in black and white. That message is not a cleverly devised story. That message is, was and always will be, the truth! You will do well to pay attention to that message. But do we? Is one hour about all the attention that message gets from you? And be honest, how much of this hour are you really paying full attention? And the message of the prophets? Have you read the last eight chapters of Ezekiel? Does Ezekiel have eight chapters? What daily attention does this message get in your home? Do facebook and candy crush get more of your attention, the best of your attention? You will do well to pay attention to it. But we fall so sinfully short.

But then! The day dawns! Boom! The light switch goes on! Pow! The morning star rises in your hearts! Bang! Jesus comes. He switches on the light of faith. He points to the evidence. Exhibit A: a perfect life. Who else has lived that? About whom else did God's voice boom, "This is my Son, my beloved. With him I am well pleased"? There's evidence, printed in black and white, attested by eyewitnesses who went to the death with their testimony. Speaking of going to the death, exhibit B: a cross. Stained with the blood of Jesus. Stained with a love so deep, so wide, so high, only blood would show it, only death would prove it. You will do well to pay attention to this message. Exhibit C: an empty tomb. This guy's "story" doesn't have an end. This Jesus lives. He rose. You will live and you will rise. Jesus brought this light into your heart. It was simple water that washed away your sins and washed away the scales from your eyes that only see water. It is bread and wine that really are his body and blood that unplug your ears to hear, "Your sins are forgiven! Go in peace!" Jesus' body and blood and cross and tomb are airtight evidence, completely reliable, found in his Word, his message, the Bible.

Above all, more than anything else, first and last, you must understand this! No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets' own interpretation of things. I love this passage. It's so fitting today. I can't tell you how many times I've been in conversations about the Bible where someone says, "Well, that's your interpretation. I have a different one." Is that what God says? Does God say it's all interpretation? Do you just get out of the Bible what you want? Is that Bible so unclear that there can be many interpretations and we can never really know which one is right, so just pick the one that works for you, or go along with what's popular today?

It's not about interpretation. No prophecy came about. Prophecy never, not once, not ever, had its origin in the human will. If the Bible were that unclear, why did God bother to write it? Why would God point to the Bible as completely reliable, even more reliable than eyewitnesses, if it's all just interpretation? The prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Like a ship is carried along by the wind, so these men were carried along by the Holy Spirit. They didn't invent their own message. They didn't devise stories. They spoke what God told them to say. They wrote what God wanted them to write. The book of Haggai in the Old Testament is only two chapters, but over 20 times Haggai assures us, "This is what the LORD says, Declares the LORD, the word of the Lord came." This is God's Word. God gave his Word to men. God gave them the exact words he wanted them to write. Maybe you can remember the days before computers, when typing was a special skill and letter writing had all kinds of formatting difficulties. A boss would dictate a letter to a secretary. They were the boss' words even though the secretary wrote them down. It's the same with the Bible. The Bible is God's Word. God just used other people to write it down. Those people did not put their own spin, or slant or interpretation. They spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Why don't we listen to some of the prophetic message, that completely reliable in black and white in writing words from God? As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. The Lord has put away your sin. You are not going to die. Listen to that message. Pay attention to it. You are an earwitness. The light has dawned. Jesus, the morning star, has risen in your heart. Your eyes of faith see his nail pierced hands. You can see him with open arms, telling you, "your sins are forgiven." That's the only evidence that matters. Amen.