

2 Peter 1:16–18

Introduction

Peter opened his letter by reminding us of the resources that have been granted to us by Christ's divine power, of the saving call of Christ that we've heard and responded to, and of all the precious and very great promises that have been granted to us. Then, on the ground of all this, Peter exhorts us to bring all of our energy to bear and to supply abundantly all of the Christian virtues in our lives – moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, piety, brotherly affection, and love. Then Peter explains why these virtues are *absolutely necessary* in every Christian's life.

“For *as long as you do these things* you will most certainly never fall. For in this way [in doing **these things**] there will be richly provided to you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

What's at stake in the living of our lives today is the possibility of falling from our “profession” of Christ into eternal destruction and ruin or being richly provided an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's because of what's at stake that Peter says he will make every effort to be always reminding his readers of these things.

And to all of this we nod our heads sleepily. Yes, of course. We agree that how we live our lives today matters for eternity. We believe on paper in the coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead (LWBC AofF). We say we believe in the words we speak, and the prayers we pray, and the songs we sing, and the sermons we preach, but are we really always living like that's what we really believe? For Peter's readers, this was an especially urgent matter because there were false prophets and teachers arising *within* the church who were accusing the Apostles of inventing this whole idea of Christ's coming to judge the world in the cleverness of their own minds. Maybe these false prophets taught that there was no physical resurrection, but only a spiritual one without any final judgment. Maybe they were accusing the Apostles of inventing this idea just to try and keep the churches under their control. Maybe they were saying that this doctrine of Christ's coming in judgment contradicted the doctrines of grace and of freedom in Christ. What we know for sure, though, is that they were saying the Apostles had invented Christ's coming in power, and that in fact no such day was coming. Brothers and sisters, do we really practically believe with the living of our lives—and not just with the confession of our lips—that Christ *is* coming in power to judge the world – and to reward those who are truly faithful to Him? Peter writes in verse 16:

I. 2 Peter 1:16a — For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...

The first question we have is “who's ‘we’”? Just before this verse, in verses 12-15, Peter used the first person *singular* no less than seven times (“I... I... I... my... me... I... my...”). And then suddenly, here in verse 16, Peter starts with these words: “For **we** did not follow cleverly devised myths when **we MADE KNOWN** to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The

verb for “made known” most often refers to the “making known” of divinely revealed truth (cf. Lk. 2:15, 17; Jn. 15:15; Acts 2:28; Eph. 3:3, 5, 10; 6:19).

- John 17:26 — I *made known* to them your name, and I will continue to *make it known*...
- Romans 16:25–26 — Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been *made known* to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God...
- Ephesians 1:7–9 — In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight *making known* to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ...

I love the beauty of this word—that the things of God and the truths of His Gospel have been “made known” to us. Who’s “we,” then? It’s the *apostles* who have *made known* the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ not as their own private teaching or personal opinion, but as a central part of the divine revelation that they had received from God Himself. Do we truly recognize the nature of the things that have been “made known” to us? Do we truly recognize that the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is an integral part of the revelation that God has given to His church through His Apostles?

The “power” and “coming” of Christ are two words that refer *together to one thing* – the coming of Christ in power, or, the powerful coming of Christ. In other words, the coming of Christ in great glory and majesty to *judge* all the world and to *reward* those who have lived lives faithful to Him (Mat. 25:31-32; 2 Thess. 1:5-10). Peter says that when this apostolic teaching was “made known” to his readers, the apostles were not following cleverly devised myths. In Peter’s day, “myth” could have very different meanings, but here it refers to a tale or a fable that doesn’t have any existence in real history and therefore has no practical value for the living of our own real lives today. For how many of us is the coming in power of our Lord Jesus Christ more myth than it is an actual day on the calendar of history? Peter writes: “We did *not* follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

II. 2 Peter 1:16b — ...but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Peter is concerned that we *know* that our Lord is coming in power to judge all the world and to reward the saints and that we know that this coming is actually rooted in physically verifiable history and so it will also come to pass in real space and time history. We *need to know* this, and we need to know this “*fully*” (cf. Jude 5). So Peter says, “We were *eyewitnesses* of [Christ’s] majesty.” Peter’s point now is not the authority of the Apostles. He’s not saying: “Since we—the Apostles—were eyewitnesses, you need to listen to us. Peter’s point this time isn’t his own authority and message, but rather the authority and the message of something he himself had physically seen with his own eyes. “We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the [*future*] power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were [*in the past*] eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

What is this “majesty” that Peter’s saw? What is it that he’s seen with his own physical eyes, and what does this have to do with Christ’s future coming in power to judge the world? We’re about to see that it has *everything to do* with that future coming in power. Everything. “We were eyewitnesses of His majesty,” Peter says:

III. 2 Peter 1:17 — For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, such a voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”...

So now we know that even though Peter’s “we” refers to all the Apostles, there’s a sense in which the testimony of all the Apostles is built in part upon the *eyewitness* testimony of just three of their number – Peter, James, and John. Peter’s looking back, now, some thirty plus years and remembering the day that’s recounted in Matthew chapter seventeen:

□ Matthew 17:1–8 — After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him... [And] behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

What an amazing and wonderful account this is. But, of course, we have to wonder what it *means*. Very often we read this, and we see the true glory of Christ’s deity being revealed; as though the veil were being pulled back for a moment and the divinity of Christ was shining through, and the disciples were able to see Christ for who He truly was and is – God incarnate, God in the flesh. But that’s not what Peter says happened. Peter says that Jesus *received* honor and glory from God the Father. Peter says, in other words, that Jesus was invested with honor and glory; that God the Father bestowed this honor and glory upon Him. The point here is not the hidden deity of Christ being unveiled, but rather God the Father granting something to our Lord Jesus Christ – granting Him a certain status and a certain exalted title and station. This is not the revelation of something that’s always been, but the revelation of something that’s new and here now, as it were, for the very first time. So what is this exalted status and station that God is bestowing upon Jesus? What is this “honor and glory”? Consider these words in Psalm chapter eight:

□ Psalm 8:3–8 — When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

In this Psalm *God* bestows upon *humans* glory and honor. And what does this glory and honor mean? It means that God has granted to mankind rule and dominion over all the works of His hands. So what does it mean, here, when *God* bestows upon *Jesus* honor and glory? This honor and glory that Jesus received from God the Father is His appointment as God’s vice-regent – the one who will exercise dominion and rule over all the world as the covenant head and representative of a redeemed humanity (cf. Heb. 2:5-11). In other words, what Peter and James and John *witnessed* was the royal investiture of Jesus, when God formally invested our Lord Jesus Christ with the honors and the station of the sovereign Lord over men and women—over you and me—and over all creation. That’s what this *means*. This is what Peter and James and John were eyewitnesses of – it’s what they saw with their own eyes. But the point isn’t just what they saw with their own eyes, but also what they physically heard with their own ears.

“For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, *such a voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory*, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” Do you see the reverence and awe with which Peter speaks some thirty plus years after the day when he had seen and heard these things? Why doesn’t Peter just say that “God spoke to Jesus”? Because Peter was *there*, and for him, to speak in this way of the things that he had heard with his own ears would have felt wholly flippant and disrespectful and irreverent. Peter was *there*, and he himself had heard even with his own flesh and blood ears “*such* a voice... borne to [Jesus] by the Majestic Glory;” He remembers vividly how when he “heard” these words he fell on his face and was terrified (Mat. 17:6). What Peter is so in awe about all these years later is not simply the voice that he heard, but the words that were spoken. “*Such* a voice was borne to Him—[or, ‘such an utterance or declaration was made to Him’]—by the Majestic Glory” and *this* is what it was(!): “**This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**” It’s one thing to *hear God speak*; it’s another thing to hear God speak *these words to Jesus*. Why? What’s the big deal about *these* words? In speaking these words to Jesus, the “Majestic Glory” is actually quoting His own words from Psalm chapter two.

□ Psalm 2:1–7 — Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed [king], saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “**You are my Son; today I have begotten you.**”

This Psalm is what’s called an enthronement Psalm. It was a Psalm especially to be used whenever a new king was installed on David’s throne in Jerusalem and invested formally with all the powers of God’s own vice-regent – the one who would exercise God’s own dominion and rule over His people and over all the earth. It was at this formal investiture—or installment—of the new king when the king was to hear, *as it were*, God speaking these words to him: “**You are my Son; today** [on this day of enthronement] I have begotten you.” So what does it mean when on the very day that Jesus receives honor and glory from God the Father, “*such* a voice was borne to Him—[*such* an utterance was made to Him]—by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son...’”?

Maybe you've noticed that whereas in Psalm two, the words are addressed directly to the king ("You are My Son"), in Matthew and also here in Peter the words seem to be spoken "about" Jesus ("this is My beloved Son"). In Matthew the voice out of the cloud goes on to say, "This is my beloved Son... *listen to Him*" (Mat. 17:5; cf. Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35). So, for whose benefit is this "voice" speaking on the mount of transfiguration? Certainly, it's for the benefit of Peter and James and John, and also for all of us. But when Peter recalls the utterance that he'd heard some thirty years earlier, he leaves out the words that were addressed to the disciples—he leaves out "listen to Him"—and he says specifically that "such a voice was **borne to JESUS by the Majestic Glory**." This means that when the disciples heard "this is My beloved Son," Jesus heard the Father speaking directly to Him in the words of Psalm two – the words of royal enthronement: "You are My beloved Son." All the kings who had ruled previously in Jerusalem only heard these words "**AS IT WERE**" spoken to them by God; but Jesus actually *did* hear "such a voice... borne to Him by the Majestic Glory." And whereas none of the kings who came before Jesus ever received this "honor and glory," Jesus received such honor and glory that "His face shown like the sun" and "His clothes became white as light."

What does it mean when on the very day that Jesus received honor and glory from God the Father, "*such a voice was borne to Him—[such an utterance was made to Him]—by the Majestic Glory, 'this is My beloved Son'*"? It means that what Peter and James and John are witnessing is the investiture of Jesus as King, when God formally invested our Lord Jesus Christ with all the honors and the station of the sovereign Lord over men and women—over you and me—and over all creation. It means that what Peter has *seen with his own eyes* and *heard with his own ears* is God the Father investing Jesus with all the powers of God's own vice-regent – the one who will exercise God's own dominion and rule over all the earth. In Psalm 2, the very next words that God speaks to His anointed king are these:

□ Psalm 2:7–9 — "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ***Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.***"

Are you beginning to understand why when Peter saw the honor and glory that was bestowed on Jesus he would say to Jesus:

□ Matthew 17:4 — "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."

If this is the day of enthronement, if this is the day that Jesus is appointed to the task of ruling and reigning over all the nations, then wouldn't it be good to have a temporary "headquarters" right away – a place from which Jesus can begin to rule immediately? But what *did* that voice say?—"This is my beloved Son, [**my chosen**; Lk. 9:35] ***with whom I am well pleased.***" The Majestic Glory "quotes" His own words not only from Psalm two, but also from Isaiah forty-two.

- Isaiah 42:1–4 — Behold my servant, whom I uphold, **my chosen, in whom my soul delights**; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

The “royal son” in Psalm 2 *is* also the “chosen servant” in Isaiah 42. God’s “royal son” is described only as one who exercises royal dominion and rule, but God’s “chosen servant” is described as one who comes **to this royal dominion and rule** only **through suffering** (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12). And so even as Peter was being made an eyewitness to the enthronement of Jesus and His investiture with royal authority and power to rule over all the nations, it was also made clear that what he was *seeing then* with his own eyes and *hearing then* with his own ears was the genuine, actual enthronement of Jesus – before it happened. What he saw and heard *was* the enthronement and investiture of Jesus—this was no dream—but it was the enthronement and investiture of Jesus on the other side of His suffering. And so we read in Matthew seventeen verse nine:

- Matthew 17:9 (cf. Acts 13:32-33; Rom. 1:1-4; Heb. 5:5; Phil. 2:8-11) — As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”

As Peter writes, now, this letter, he looks *back* to the suffering and death of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead, and he remembers what **HE saw with his own eyes** and what **HE heard with his own ears**, and he writes to all of us:

“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths 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 a voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’; ...

IV. 2 Peter 1:18 — ...and we heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

“The false teachers can say what they want about the things that we’ve made known to you, but it’s God the Father Himself—the Majestic Glory—who has spoken. And who will dare to doubt what *God* has done and what *God* has said?” Once again, Peter’s point this time is not his own authority as an Apostle, but the authority of this voice *from heaven*—the voice of God—which he, and James and John had actually heard with their own ears. When Peter recounts what that voice said, he adds for good measure an **emphatic “I”** (Greek) – “This is My beloved Son, with whom **I** am well pleased.” The false teachers can say what they want about Christ’s future coming in power to judge the world and reward the faithful, but God the Father Himself—the Majestic Glory—has spoken, and *He* has appointed Him to this very task. *He* has invested Him with His own honor and glory. *He* has enthroned Jesus and invested Him with all the powers of His own vice-regent to exercise His own rule and dominion over all the world. *God* has done

it—“we were *eyewitnesses* of His majesty”; the Majestic Glory has spoken—“we *heard* this very voice borne from heaven”; ***and so nothing in all the world can be more sure than the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*** (cf. Mat. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27).

“We heard this very voice borne from heaven,” Peter says, “**for we were with Him on the holy mountain.**” What is this “holy mountain”? This time it’s Peter who quotes the words of God from Psalm chapter two:

□ Psalm 2:6 — “As for me, [says the Lord God,] I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain.”

Let the false teachers scoff (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-4); they’re like the nations in Psalm two who rage and plot in vain. But God has installed His King on Zion and so the King **will certainly come in power** to break the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. God has installed His King on Zion, and so our Lord Jesus Christ **will certainly come in power** to judge all the world and to richly reward the faithful with an entrance into His own eternal kingdom – “Blessed are all who take refuge in Him” (cf. Ps. 2:12).

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, we believe on paper in the coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead. We say that we believe in the words we speak, and in the prayers we pray, and the songs we sing, and in the sermons we preach, but are we really always living in light of this reality? For how many of us is the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ more myth than it is an actual day on the calendar of history? How often does the living of our lives reveal that we’re actually more like the scoffers than we would want to admit? Peter is concerned in these verses, and throughout this letter, that we *know* that our Lord is coming in power to judge all the world and to reward those who are faithful to Him; he’s concerned that we know this “*fully*” (cf. Jude 5). And so he writes to us:

“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths 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 a voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’; and we heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.”

God Himself has done it; God Himself has spoken. Peter and James and John were **eyewitnesses** of this honor and glory that Christ received from God the Father; they heard with **their own ears** such a voice and utterance borne to Jesus by the Majestic Glory. Therefore, ***nothing in all the world can be more sure than the coming in power of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** How, then, should we live, brothers and sisters—today, and tomorrow, and every day—until He comes?