

2 Peter 1:16 - 2:1 ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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." {17 Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35} ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ 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.

“Eyewitnesses to Majesty”

Majesty; now that is a word that probably no longer has any meaningful context in the English language anymore. When we use it we have to remember that we are reaching back into a time when royalty actually meant something, back to the 12th and 13th centuries. Back then you would call your royal person “your Majesty” or refer to them as “her Majesty” or “his Majesty”. Our word *majesty* derives from the old English word *maieste* which came from the Anglo-French word *majesté* which came from the Latin word *majestat-* or *majestas* which is akin to the Latin word *major* which means *great*. The word reflects that a person has sovereign power and authority and a high quality of honour called dignity. People with majesty often dressed to the occasion in extravagant robes and sat on golden thrones. The reason for all of this splendour or grandeur had to do with the belief that royal power or authority was established and granted by God and the royal was God’s means of reigning here on earth. Therefore, all the pomp and splendour was meant to reflect the majesty or greatness of God and somehow convey the wonder of God’s presence there in the royal court.

I don’t think we think in royal terms any more. The closest we come to it, I think, is when we find ourselves taking note of the beauty of the creation when we wax patriotic. As an American I was raised to “feel” majesty whenever I heard the words: “O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain! America! America! God shed his grace on thee and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!” There’s another song the has prompted me towards idolatry of nation and its mostly because I’m thankful for where I have wound up. You people know this one: “O Canada! Our home and native land! True patriot love in all thy sons command. With glowing hearts we see thee rise, the True North, strong and free! From far and wide, O Canada, we stand on guard for thee. God keep our land glorious and free! O Canada, we stand on guard for thee. O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.”

Yet, this sort of feeling of the majesty or greatness of something wasn’t what Peter meant when he said that he and others had been eyewitnesses of the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, a majesty that reflected the honour and glory

that God the Father conveyed to him when he spoke from the midst of the cloud at Jesus' Transfiguration. Peter calls that cloud the Majestic Glory. I'll say more on that here in a minute. On the mountain that day Peter, James, and John saw Jesus as he is in glory or we might say as he is in heaven and soon to be revealed on earth. The glowing white signifies that heaven was opened so that they could see in and they see that Jesus is Lord over all creation, the Messiah to whom the Law and the prophets pointed. Then the voice of the Father in the cloud revealed that Jesus is God's Son, the Beloved. The cloud, the Majestic Glory as Peter calls it is in fact God's presence with us, God the Holy Spirit. Just as at Jesus' baptism heaven was opened so that those on earth could see in and what we see is God's self revelation as Trinity.

The majesty Peter was eyewitness to is the revelation that God is Trinity that arises the midst of seeing the revelation that Jesus is Lord and Messiah in accordance with Moses and Elijah, who symbolize the Law and the prophets. In addition to the revelation the three disciples were overcome with something that felt really, really good – not just a beautiful sunset Miller Light in hand life is good feeling, not some I love my country sort of feeling. Rather, this kind of good was what I call “Holy Good”, standing in the presence of God good. It was so good that they wanted to build booths, little tents of meeting like Moses had back in the Book of Exodus that he kept set up outside of the camp. The glory of the Lord would come down upon that tent, visibly come down upon it in a cloud, and Moses would go inside and meet with God and when he came out his face would be shining, shining so bright that he had to wear a veil to keep from freaking everybody out. On that mountain during the Transfiguration the veil between heaven and earth was lifted and everyone and everything there was filled with the knowledge of God, the knowing of God himself, as the waters cover the sea just like it will be when God makes all things new according to Isaiah 11:9.

Peter calls the cloud that surrounded them the Majestic Glory because it is the same cloud that led the ancient Israelites in the desert and rested upon Mt. Sinai when they entered into the covenant with the LORD and agreed to do all that the LORD had spoken. All through the Exodus it says the glory of the LORD appeared to them in a cloud. The Old Testament uses the word glory to speak of God's presence made visible. The Hebrew word is *kabod* which means heaviness or weightiness. You can't see heaviness, but you can feel heaviness. When Moses went up the mountain or into the tent of meeting he felt the heaviness, the glory, of the LORD. In the Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple when the priest went into the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was, he would go in and sit on the lid of the Ark, the Mercy Seat, and would feel the heaviness of the Lord. In the days between the Old and New Testaments the Israelites began to call the glory of the Lord the *Shekinah* which quite literally means the Presence of the Lord dwelling with them.

On Transfiguration Sunday one of the most important things we celebrate is that our God is not a God way far off but rather our God the Holy Trinity makes his presence known and felt. The Holy Spirit didn't go back to heaven after the New Testament was written, nor did the Shekinah or the heaviness of God cease to be seen and felt. We like Peter are not those who follow cleverly invented

myths when we talk about the power and coming of our LORD Jesus Christ. We speak as eyewitnesses because we too also know him in his power and coming. We too are eyewitnesses to his majesty because the Father has called to us each from the Majestic Glory to listen to his Son, the Beloved, and we have heard his voice so that we really know that we are God’s beloved too.

Frequently, when the elders and I pray before the service I ask the LORD to let his Spirit rest upon us that we may rest in him and during the service he comes with the peace of Christ and does just that renewing us. When the people of God are summonsed to gather together to worship, to pray, and to hear and study scripture the presence of the LORD is upon them, the Shekinah, the heaviness. God himself is the very proof of his existence. There is nothing I could ever say to convince anyone of this. That’s the work of the Holy Spirit who is here with us addressing us each with the voice of the Father who speaks Jesus Christ to us telling us he is our LORD and brother and friend and in so doing he speaks the power of the new creation into us causing us to change and become more Christ-like.

Speaking as an eyewitness, I am in this pulpit today because I have been in the midst of his majesty and know it’s good. I am an eyewitness who can say this Jesus stuff is real. 22 years ago I quit going to church because it was what I was supposed to do and instead I started coming because in Peter’s words, “It is good for us to be here.” God is good...all the time. Amen