

Title: Fable, Fairytale, or Fact? (Part 2)

Passage: 2 Peter 1:17-18; Matthew 17:1-8

Theme: It is certain that Christ will return; until then give yourselves to the prophetic Word of God

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{{Read Passage}}

It is certain that Christ will return; until then give yourselves to the prophetic Word of God

We've seen how the return of X fits into the unfolding context. From the false teachers that Peter addresses in chapt. 2 (of which his passage is an introduction) to the previous context of making one's calling and election sure.

Peter has bad theology in his crosshairs. BT that says X isn't coming again to judge t/living & dead

and/or

That it's ok to live a sinful life as a Xn (by ok I mean that it has no bearing on whether one is really a Xn).

That's all very relevant here.

In chapter 3 Peter calls them "unprincipled men" who "twist the Scriptures to their own destr."

They denied "the promise of His coming?" and even mocked it (3:2-4).

Peter likens them to "unreasoning animals" who have "eyes full of adultery" and are "slaves of corruption." They are deceived and are out to deceive. They are terrorists in t/CH of JC.

Peter says {summarize 1:12 - 15}

It is certain that Christ will return; until then give yourselves to the prophetic Word of God

Peter begins in vv. 16 with ==>

I. An Eyewitness Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (16-18)

He gives a negative followed by a positive.

A. Negatively: Christ's Return is not a Myth We Followed (16)

For we did not follow ingenious myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

1. Power and coming form what's called a "hendiadys"

Hendiadys literally means 1 thru 2. "Hen" "dia" "Dys".

H. = figure of speech where 2 nouns or verbs are used that overlap in meaning. They in essence refer to the same thing.

Common example is Gen. 1:26.

Here "power and coming" refer to the same thing. "Powerful coming" (Christ's power demonstrated in his second coming).

2. This is a reference to the second advent

We've seen that.

From the context – eschatological (end times / judgement)

T/word παρουσία. Used 24x, the majority of Christ's 2d coming.

b. Peter says ==>

When we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we weren't pursuing after ingenious myths. . .

I. An Eyewitness Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (16-18)

A. Negatively: Christ's Return is not a Myth We Followed (16)

B. Positively: Christ's Return is Prefigured in His Transfiguration Which we Witnessed (16-18)

. . . but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

1. His μεγαλειότης = grandeur, splendor, immensity, majesty

In NT this is a word only used by Peter & Luke.

Luke uses the word in Luke 9:43 of God's greatness.

{context}

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

. . . we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

The same kind of greatness that characterizes the Father also characterizes the Son.

Hebrews 1:3 **And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.**

2. The eyewitness account that Peter is referencing is what we call "The Transfiguration" For that we turn to Matthew chapt. 17 . . .

a. Background = 16:28 {read from verse 21}

(1) Difficult verse and there have been many different views as to what Jesus meant – or more specifically how this was fulfilled (or even if it was fulfilled)

(a) I think I can give you a taste of the different views by boiling them down to 4

i. There's what we could call "The mistaken view"

Jesus was simply mistaken. (Liberals).

ii. Destruction of Jerusalem View

Jesus' coming in power was fulfilled at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Those who hold this view take note of the parallel to chapter 24.

iii. What we might call The Kingdom View

A few variations of this view. Some focus on X's resurrection and ascension; some on the coming of the H.S. at Pentecost. Or a combination of all of these (Jesus' glorious resurrection, His ascension and session to reign with God, and the coming of the Holy Spirit) coupled w/the subsequent expansion of the Gospel through the church.

iv. Transfiguration View

This is t/view I would subscribe to – for reasons that we will now see.

First thing we notice is the connection to 17:1 / close proximity. conjunction και.

Some have balked at this due to Jesus' words that "some of those who are standing here who will not taste death" until they see these things, saying that this seems strange in light of the fact that the Transfiguration

is only 6 days later. IOW - if the Transfig. fulfills 16:28 why would J. say something like that? Be one thing if it was 6 years, but 6 days?

I think t/answer is, First – t/Transfig. isn't a complete fulfillment, it's a preview of Christ's coming and a guarantee of it (that's t/way Peter sees it in our text). May be that Jesus is using a figure of speech for emphasis. IOW - *"My coming is sure. I will return to render to every man according to his deeds. That may be far off, but some are here who will live to see a preview of it."*

Church historian JND Kelly writes that there is evidence that those in t/early post-apostolic CH viewed t/transfiguration in this way: As a foretaste of the yet-future parousia. [cf. JND Kelly, 318]

b. 17:1

Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves.

(1) Luke's account tells us that Jesus went up the Mountain to pray

Luke also says that this was "some 8 days later" which is a Greek way of speaking (Luke writes to Gentiles) that means "about a week later."

(2) We have Jesus and His "inner circle" Peter, James and John

I.C. because they are commonly mentioned together. It was PJJ that were with Jesus in t/Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus cried out to t/Father in anticipation of His mission that would take Him to t/cross.

(a) We have ==>

i. Peter

Of course, this is Simon Peter the well known disciple of Jesus who wrote 1 and 2 Peter.

ii. James

There are half a dozen or so men named James in t/NT, including t/Lord's half brother who wrote t/book of James.

This is not that James, this is James The Son of Zebedee, a Galilean fisherman who was called with his brother John to be one of the twelve apostles (Mt. 4:21). Last we read of him is in Acts 12 where Luke tells us he was put to death by Herod (would have been more than 10 years after this account in Matt. 17).

iii. John, the brother of James

This is John t/author t/Gospel that bears his name, as well as 3 letters (1st-3rd John) and t/BOR.

This John is self-described as the disciple whom Jesus loved' ---

*who lay close to the chest of Jesus at the Last Supper

*who was entrusted with the care of his mother at the time of his death

*who ran with Peter to the tomb on the first Easter morning

(3) The four of them go on a journey to a high mountain

(a) The mountain itself isn't identified

Traditionally, t/site has been identified with Mt. Tabor (a relatively low mount of 1900 feet surrounded by low-lying flatlands).

However, MT was S. of Galilee, not near to where Jesus and the disciples were at this time, far north near Caesarea Philippi.

At this time there was also a fortress located on top of this mount which makes it an unlikely location for t/private nature of this account.

Another option is Mt. Hermon (9200 feet). Mt. Hermon was just beyond Caes. Phil. to t/N. But it was o/s of Palestine proper in Gentile territory. Mark 9:14 says that they ran into teachers of the law as soon as they came down, so that may be problematic as Jewish teachers would not likely be in Gentile territory.

Perhaps a better option is Mt. Miron, the highest mountain in Palestine proper (almost 4k feet). M.M. is midway between C.P. and Capernaum.

Bottom line is we don't know for sure. But it was a mountain, no doubt one of those 3.

(b) Keep in mind that key events happen on mountains

God first appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exo. 3:1ff).

It was on Mt. Carmel that God answered Elijah's prayer by sending fire to consume the sacrifice there thus defeating the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:16-40).

God later appeared to Elijah on Mt. Sinai, as he had to Moses (1 Kings 19:9-18).

It was on a mountain that Satan tempted Jesus (Matt. 4).

The Second Coming of X is I.D. w/a mountain, t/Mt. of Olives, according to Zech. 14:4

c. 17:2a

And He was transfigured before them . . .

(1) He was transfigured or transformed

(a) Verb μεταμορφωω (noun is where we get our word metamorphosis)

Word used in 2 Cor. 3:18 and Romans 12:2 of the inward transformation of the believer to Christlikeness.

Here it's used of t/outward transformation of X whereby t/veil of his humanity was parted displaying t/glory of his divinity.

I think it's what John had in mind in 1:14 when he wrote,

We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father...

d. 17:2b

... and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

Luke's account ==> *... the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming.*

Mark's Gospel ==> *... His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.*

This is t/unsurpassed glory of God!

(1) Remember when Moses came down from Mount Sinai in Exo. 34?

Verses 29-30 - *29 It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. 30 So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.*

In 2 Cor. 3 Paul refers to this account saying that ==>

... the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was ...

And that ==>

. . . Moses . . . used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.

Moses face shone because he was reflecting the glory of God.
Jesus entire person shone because he was t/Glory of God!

The glory on Moses face faded away.
The glory of JC never fades or falters.

Here t/disciples see Him as He really is!
They only knew Him in His humanity; here they are given a glimpse into his deity!

His humanity veiled his deity.

Charles Wesley wrote in the 18th century ==>
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate Deity, Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.

Here, for the benefit of Peter, James and John, the veil is lifted.
The supreme glory of t/2d person of t/Trinity is revealed.

e. 17:3

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

(1) Moses and Elijah?

Wouldn't you love to know what they were talking about? To be a fly on the olive tree, to hear that conversation?

Luke tells us at least part of what they were talking about ==>

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

(2) Moses, Elijah, and Jesus

Not 3 great men // 3 equals. 2 Great Men and t/Son of God. 2 Sinners and t/Redeemer of Sinners.

Do you think they were interested in His mission? He was their Savior and Lord. They weren't saved by keeping the Law; their salvation ultimately depended on t/Son of God who was crucified for them.

(3) What were the Two great divisions of the O.T. Scriptures?

Law / Prophets.

Who was the great representative of the Law? Moses.

Who was the first of the Great Prophets? Elijah.

(a) Why did Moses and Elijah appear here with JC?

Their presence with Jesus was symbolic of t/fact that He was t/final fulfillment of what those 2 men stood for.

Matthew 5:17 *“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”*

NT scholar D.A. Carson writes ==>

"Both Moses and Elijah had eschatological roles: Moses was the model for the eschatological [or "end times"] Prophet (Deut 18:18) and Elijah for the forerunner [that is Elijah was the forerunner who would introduce t/Messiah] . . . Both [Moses and Elijah] had strange ends; both were men of God in times of transition, the first to introduce the covenant and second to work for renewed adherence to it. Both

experienced a vision of God's glory, one at Sinai (Exod 31:18) and the other at Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Now, however, the glory is Jesus' glory, for it is he who is transfigured and who radiates the glory of Deity. . . . Together they may well summarize the Law and the Prophets." [D.A. Carson, Matthew 13-28, 384]

This is an amazing experience. I'm convinced that t/Transfiguration of X is one of the most under-rated accounts in all of t/NT if not all of Scripture. We miss t/importance and significance of what happened here.

Not only we, but also Peter. Poor Peter

f. 17:4

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

In all fairness, maybe it was one of those times when you think "Someone should say something."

Sometimes it's better to keep silent to watch and listen . . . to worship . . . silently.

We don't know what Peter was thinking.

Was he captivated by t/appearance of 2 OT celebrities, Moses and Elijah?

Was he unaware that Jesus, the Man from Galilee, was superior, far superior to them?

His suggestion to make 3 tabernacles parallels t/OT Feast of Booths when the Jews built shelters for themselves and lived in them for 7 days (Lev. 23:42-43). It was a commemoration of God's deliverance during t/Exodus and His provision during their subsequent 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

Maybe t/connection for Peter was that it was during this time that Moses received t/Law at Sinai.

This wasn't a cute suggestion. As all 3 accounts tell us, t/disciples were terrified.

I can't help but think that this was one of those times that you say something but wish you hadn't. And you stand there feeling foolish. "Why did I say that?" Like the SWA commercial "Wanna get away?"

Peter doesn't have to stand there long. For we read in the next verse==>

g. 17:5a

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them . . .

(1) Bright Cloud – Another eschatological connection to 16:28 (as well as 2 Peter 1:16-21)

(a) Cloud represents the Shekinah Glory of God

Shekinah is a Hebrew word from the root 'to dwell' that is translated as the 'Presence' of God.

Rabbinic literature refers to God's Shekinah in a variety of ways. In t/OT God's presence was seen in t/Cloud that led the Israelites in t/desert as well as in t/tent of meeting.

The word for the tent of meeting, the mishkan or ‘*tabernacle*,’ comes from the same root as Shekinah.

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.**

The cloud protected the people from the pursuing Egyptians (Exod. 14:19-20).

It appeared at the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10).

AND (here's another connection) this Cloud descended on Mt. Sinai when Moses went up to receive the Law from God.

Exodus 19 describes it this way: . . . **Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. . . there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain [and] . . . all the people . . . trembled.**

Luke 9:34 **While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.**

Verse 6 says that they . . . **fell face down to the ground and were terrified.**

Moses == Mt. Sinai vs. Christ here (this unnamed Mt. a type of Mt. Zion?)

And there's not only a parallel to Sinai – there's also a connection to t/Second Coming.

We see this "cloud" again in Acts 1:9 (ascension to t/right hand of t/Father - a cloud received him out of their sight). 2 Angels that appeared and told t/disciples that the same way Jesus left, he would also return ==> Cloud is connected with X's return in judgement and glory.

Daniel 7:13 is relevant in that regard ==>

"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

Matthew 24:30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Revelation 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

h. 17:5b

... and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

Similar to what God declared at Jesus' baptism

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Here we have the command, "Listen to Him" which echos Deut. 18:15, where Moses told the people of Israel ==>

"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him."

It also stands in contrast to Peter's abrupt talking out of turn. Don't talk; listen!

i. 17:6

When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified.

(1) Visible glory of deity brings terror

God told Moses, "You cannot see my face and live to tell about it!"

In Daniel chapt. 10, Daniel has a vision of God and what does he say?
... no strength was left in me ... my natural color turned to a deathly pallor ... as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Always wonder when people say they've seen God. I knew a man who claimed that Jesus appeared to him in his living room and sat down for a chat. (I guess they chatted a while and Jesus left.)

Story of t/guy who shows up on Xn TV (those 2 words generally form an oxymoron – it's rare that you see a Xn TV program that's really Xn) and he tells of how he died and went to heaven where he saw God. "In fact, I wore this tie. It still smells like heaven" (anchovies).

Years ago John MacArthur told the story about a friend who claimed that Jesus would appear to him while shaving. John asked him, "And you keep on shaving?"

No! If God appears to you, you fall on your face and hit your head on the commode on the way down!

Judges 13 the Angel of the LORD appears before a man named Manoah along with his wife. The AofTLord who was in fact t/preincarnate X. So Manoah said to his wife, “We will surely die, for we have seen God.”

Isaiah saw the divine majesty and cried out,
“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

We read in that account, Isaiah chapter 6, that one of the holy angels touched Isaiah's mouth with a burning coal and said ==>
“Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

What happens here in Matthew 17?

j. 17:7

And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.”

Habakkuk 1:13 [God's] eyes are too pure to approve evil, And [He] can not look on wickedness . . .

Turn that around. We who are wicked cannot look upon God who is pure, consuming holiness.

How can the wicked stand? Who will stand on their behalf?
Jesus Christ the righteous! Jesus mediates God's wrath and brings us into a peaceful relationship with God through faith.

k. 17:8

And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

Go back to 2 Peter.

1. Testimony seen and heard by Peter, James, and John (16-17)

For we did not follow ingenious 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."

God's imprimatur of approval upon His Son & a preview—even a guarantee of His coming again.

And we heard this voice borne out of heaven when we were with Him in the holy mountain.

Psalm 2:1–12 1 Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!” 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. 5 Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” 7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’ ” 10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11 Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!