

OUR FAITH IS FOR REAL
TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

2 PET 1:16-21
FEB 29, 2017

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.” 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.

American Dairy association has a promotion campaign,
saying look for the “real” seal – shows it is real dairy product,
made with actual milk from real 4 footed cows.
Seal is meant to be guide to people in this day.
Many products in dairy case actually made from
vegetables, nuts, soy, etc.
They may look like butter, taste like butter,
“can’t believe it’s not butter,” but read fine print – isn’t.
Nothing against vegetables – it just isn’t dairy.
Text suggests we also need to look for the “real” seal on faith.
What passes for religion or Christianity
may look, feel, or sound like real thing, but not really true.
Peter tells us today, Gospel of Jesus Christ has “real” seal.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AFFIRMS REAL TRUTHS
CHRISTIAN FAITH SHOWS IN REAL LIFE
CHRISTIAN FAITH IS BASED ON REAL EVENTS

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Key question philosophers wrestle with is “What is real?”

On one hand, observable objects, historical events are real, can be documented, measured, inspected.

On other hand, is both more and less to reality than we see.

Are spiritual realities no one can see with the naked eye, real events no one has ever seen or recorded.

On other hand, some things seen you would swear are real, can be illusions, hallucinations, misperceptions that another observer sees differently.

When Peter says we have word of prophets made more certain he is saying basis of Christian faith is real in both senses.

First, Christianity is unique, tied to real historical events.

Story occurred in real live history, woven together with Pharaoh of Egypt, King David, Nebuchadnezzar.

It happened in days of Caesar Augustus and under the rule of Pontius Pilate.

Is more historical verification Jesus lived than Napoleon.

Is not exaggerated myth like Roman gods, King Arthur, not just story about spiritual beings like Hindu scriptures, not undocumented story of prehistoric events like

Book of Mormon, written in a “lost language” seen only by Joseph Smith when he put face in hat.

2nd, not just people’s own interpretation of these events.

some say predictions of prophets were actually written after the events in order to put a spin on them.

Risen Christ invented by disciples as they told stories about Jesus, whom they honored after he died.

Paul invented Christianity and included many ideas from Greek philosophy and popular culture of his day.

Peter says, “no.” People didn’t just get idea to write on own, and didn’t just write interpretation figured out for selves.

They wrote because Holy Spirit pushed them to write and they wrote words Spirit breathed into them.

Spirit’s work is like kite carried along by wind.

We can’t see wind but can see it is there by what it does.

How can we be certain of this? Prophets all pointed to Christ

and, Peter says, we saw one all talked about with own eyes.

Jesus also told parables: made up stories with a moral.

Paul also wrote a couple of times: This is just my opinion.

and faith is also being sure of things not seen.
Book of Revelation is full of fantastic images
but we must recognize reality when we see it.
Jesus in whom we believe, Peter says, is reality.

This is why...

CHRISTIAN FAITH SHOWS IN REAL LIFE

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.

We need to pay careful attention to light of God's word
because world we now live in is a dark place.
and even believers in Jesus go through dark times.

People in this post-modern world tend not to believe
in objective truth: what true for you may not be true for me.
But amazing to me: growing # of Christians take same attitudes.
A poll at an LCMS youth gathering revealed:
15%: all religions pretty much alike, so worship as you want.
over 50%; doesn't matter what church you worship at.

According to a George Barna Poll:

only 22%: moral truth is absolute, not change w/ circumstance
Mainline protestants hardly better: 32%
39% say they read Bible each week.
only 13% say they base moral decisions on Bible.
25% say they base moral decisions on feelings.

No wonder those claiming to be Christians live way they do.
What they claim makes little difference in behavior.

More of what we see in today's world is virtual reality,
appears real, feels real, but isn't – is illusion.

What hat we see in movies doesn't really happen,
is digitally inserted

In video game you can drive car or spaceship,
run through jungle of medieval castle,
but not really driving or running, just wiggling thumbs.

Too much Christian living has become virtual reality.

See people got to church, wave at neighbors, smile in store,
but is illusion, family is falling apart,
feel alone, afraid, unsure if God really cares.

On other hand, others live under control of sinful desire.

Say they love everyone, care about needy,
but beyond general feeling, do nothing to help.

Say, "in my heart I know I believe in Jesus."
but other activities take priority over worship.
Others are like Peter's description in following chapter:
they revel in pleasures, have eyes full of adultery,
are experts in greed,
but will say, "Inside, I am really a good person."

Let's get real. Real faith shows in real life.
so where do we get faith like this?

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Peter was changed from simple fisherman
who feared Jesus would let him drown in storm on sea
into spokesman of disciples who said,
"You are the Christ, the son of the living God"
and said when on trial, "We cannot help but speak
of what we have seen and heard."

What changed his life? It wasn't cleverly invented stories.

It was seeing Jesus do real miracles,
seeing him shine like sun, hearing God speak out loud,
seeing Jesus bleeding and dying,
seeing risen Jesus stand, hold out hand with nail hole,
seeing Jesus ascend, rising up onto clouds.

Faith is not based on what he did, made up or imagined,
but on what he saw God do, heard God say.

Though he sinned, risen Jesus forgave him.

He knew it was real.

what about us? we too have realities to give us real faith.

In Holy Baptism – not just nice little ritual we like to do
to dedicate our children to God,
showing we hope God loves them too.

Baptism is real; it is God doing something,
washing away sins, just as he promises to do,
causing real saving faith, giving new life.

working inside them and in us with Holy Spirit
now and through whole life.

We have Holy Communion – not just special ceremony
we do to remind ourselves what Jesus did once long ago
to help us feel more close to Jesus.

Holy Communion is real – Jesus is here in the flesh,
giving us same body and blood which he gave on cross,
personally guaranteeing us forgiveness of all our sins
because he paid for them with his death.

In Bible we have real word of God, not ancient religious musing,
not just expression like when some say, “God spoke to me”
meaning thought popped into my head, think it was God.
But when we hear Bible read in church, God really speaks
like he spoke to Peter, James & John,
saying, “This is my beloved Son, Jesus, listen to him.”

This word is living and active and works in our hearts & lives.

Moslems say Jesus didn't really die on cross & rise again.

Liberal Christians say doesn't really matter if he did or not,
in some sense he is still with us, we will keep living.

Peter and Paul say: Get real. If he didn't die we are still in sin,
if he didn't really rise we have no hope.

But he did die. He did rise He did everything just right.

He is God's son.

This makes a real difference for us.

In dairy products, the real seal depends on what you start with.

Having a real Christian faith and real Christian life
depends on starting with what God really does for us.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AFFIRMS REAL TRUTHS

Prophets through whom God spoke agree w/ eye witnesses:

God sent his own son Jesus in person to be our savior.

CHRISTIAN FAITH SHOWS IN REAL LIFE

When we pay attention to God's truth it gives real faith.

Jesus, morning star, rises in our hearts, rules our lives.

CHRISTIAN FAITH IS BASED ON REAL EVENTS

Eye witnesses saw what Jesus did. It changed their lives.

God comes in real ways w/ real power in our lives today.