

The Transfiguration of our Lord – Epistle

A Lamp Shining In A Dark Place

2 Peter 1:16-21

The Transfiguration of our Lord

Analysis by Ron Starenko

16For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” 18We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the mountain. 19So we have the prophetic witness more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, 21because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

DIAGNOSIS: A Dark Place

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Searching*

Today we are witnessing a resurgent interest in religion, but not necessarily in our churches. It is not religion that excites people, so much as being spiritual. Tradition is no longer where it’s at. Instead, we must be seekers and find our own way

spiritually. It is a very individualistic quest, “a matter of one’s own interpretation” (v. 20), as though the way to dispel darkness is to find the light within. What seems to appeal to multitudes today is no different from what captivated seekers in the apostolic era: following “cleverly devised myths” (v. 16) in order to become spiritual. Philosophies, therapies, teachings, and lifestyles are employed in every generation to escape darkness and become enlightened. Every such search originates in the “human will” (v. 21), where darkness can only beget darkness.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Led Astray*

Human beings are forever capable of being led astray. And since the human heart is a dark place to begin with, we are bound to end up looking for the truth in the wrong places. Like the apostles who see Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, we misplace our trust. We allow ourselves to be distracted by myths and legends that replace Jesus’ “majesty” (v. 16).

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *The Failure of the Human*

Where does that leave us? Certainly it leaves us lost in a dark place (v. 19). Our spirituality, which derives from our own strivings, is a failure. World peace eludes us, world hunger widens, universal greed and lust for power remains our nemesis. Our personal biographies reveal our dark side. What else is that than our godlessness—“godlostness”? The human experience is God’s judgment on our narcissistic dreams. God’s judgment is to leave us in the dark.

PROGNOSIS: A Lamp Shining

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *The Rising of the Morning Star*

Such dismal prospects cannot be changed from within. They

require a revelation, something from outside of ourselves—an action of God anchored in history, like “a lamp shining in a dark place” (v. 19). Only light from God can brighten our circumstances; so God offers his Morning Star, “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 16). The dimness of the human race, despite all of its religiosity, is finally overcome by a “Majestic Glory” (v. 17), a majesty at first concealed, and then later revealed through death and resurrection. Jesus, the “Beloved Son” (v. 17) on the Mount of Transfiguration, makes payment for sin on another mountain called Golgotha. The ascent to Golgotha, creates the majesty that saves. The transfiguration of Jesus, then, is the Father’s foregone blessing on the redeeming work that Christ does on the cross. The Morning Star will rise from death! Light begets light.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – Eyewitnesses

Such good news dispels the darkness because we heard it from “men and women moved by the Holy Spirit” (v. 21). They witnessed to something outside themselves, something from God: “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 16). They were eyewitnesses for us, showing us the One “who received honor and glory” (v. 17). And so, by seeing and believing in Jesus, the transfigured Lord through them, “by the prophetic witness more fully confirmed” (v. 19), we are transfigured, changed into God’s “beloved.” Light begets light.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – Lamp-Bearers

No longer are we under some spiritual obligation to gain enlightenment. We have received Christ’s light through our Baptism and each time we share in the Eucharist. We are now persons who reflect the transfigured Christ through our being and doing. As lamp-bearers we take the light of the Christ into all the dark places where human beings founder. We get to be people “who have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2), people who have been empowered to share “the vision” (Matt. 17:9).

Incredibly, we are living proof of how Light begets light.