

NOT CLEVERLY INVENTED STORIES

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . ” (2 Pet 1:16)

Have you ever felt frustration when trying to convince unbelievers about the “power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”? Your frustration will probably increase if you encounter someone from another country or another culture. There are 1.5 billion Muslims, for example, that are scattered throughout the world. Then there are over 900 million Hindus, and 394 million who believe in the traditional religions of China. In addition to Jews, Buddhists, and dozens of other religions there are over 1 billion who claim to be Atheists, Agnostics, and non-religious. How can we convince these millions of unbelievers that we are not following “cleverly invented stories”?

The reason Peter gave is quite remarkable. He cited only what he had witnessed on the “sacred mountain”. Please remember that Peter had been with Jesus from the time that John was baptizing until the day that He was taken up from them into heaven. He had witnessed every earthly miracle that Jesus performed. It is not easy, however, to convince unbelievers of these miracles. Scholars even disagree on historical events that take place in our own generation, certainly they will not be easily convinced about something that happened 2,000 years ago. Perhaps this is why Peter chose to focus only on what he had personally seen and heard on the sacred mountain.

What did he see, and what did He hear? He saw the “transformation” of Jesus and he heard the voice of God from heaven that validated the experience. All of this made the word of the prophets more certain in his own mind (vs. 19).

This remarkable story is found three times in the Bible (Matt. 17:1 - 13; Mk. 9:2 - 13; Lk. 9:28 - 36). The word used in Scripture to describe what happened is “metamorphoo”. It is the basis of our English word “metamorphosis”. It literally means to change from one form to another, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. This word is only found four times in the Scriptures. Two times it refers to what happened to Jesus (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2); and two times it refers to what happens to Christians when they are born again (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

The subject of our discussion is not peripheral. It is at the heart and core of Christian evidence. It is the single most powerful demonstration that Christians are not following cleverly invented stories. The transformation of someone from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit transcends language and cultural barriers. It can be understood by people who are illiterate or mentally retarded. It requires no historical documents, highly trained experts, or expensive equipment. Peter was living proof! He once was a vacillating, headstrong, undependable fisherman named Simon, but had been transformed by Christ into the Rock Apostle whose name heads each listing of the Twelve.

Witnessing the transforming power of God certainly can increase our confidence in the Bible. Initially, we study the Bible like we focus on a light shining in a dark place, but when we see the Bible transform the lives of those around us our confidence starts to grow. Ultimately the reality of God can dawn upon us like a magnificent sunrise. The beautiful truth of His Word brightens our lives with ever increasing splendor. Ultimately, the day star arises in our own hearts and we too shed abroad the love of God by the power of His Spirit.

Jesus taught that the message of religious teachers is discerned by the fruit they produce (Matt. 6:15 - 20). Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. Please prayerfully consider that when you let your light shine others will take note of what has happened to you and glorify your Father Who is in heaven. The transformation of your life is like a living letter that is known and read by all men. The word of your testimony is a powerful weapon to destroy the Devil and bring victory to the people of God. Remember the blind man who was healed by Jesus. His irrefutable testimony was fresh and powerful. He was no expert in history or theology, but he did know one thing with certainty - “I was blind but now I see” (Jn. 9:25). The transformation of our lives can also convince a doubting world that we are not following cleverly invented stories.

