

Thought for the week (from Roots on the Web) I was there

Have you ever listened to a eulogy at a funeral and thought, 'If that was me, I would have wanted to leave out that part!' The great thing about recounting an event from your own life is that you can do a little editing, because it is your story to tell in the way that makes the most sense to you.

The account of the transfiguration on the mountain, as recorded by Matthew, is echoed by Peter's later letter. Even if not written by Peter himself, the memory rings true as a record of what he experienced and how he felt. Looking at the event across the three synoptic Gospels, Peter features centre stage in each. Matthew recorded that Peter offered to put up three dwellings, one each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Luke's account adds 'not knowing what he said'. Mark goes further, justifying the impetuous suggestion with the reasonable explanation: 'for they were terrified'. Between these three reports of one event there are varying levels of information, just as we would expect to find in contemporary articles across a range of newspapers. We each see an event from an angle, or hear it from a source, or choose to include or forget some details.

Has anyone been a witness to an event that they were asked later to describe, perhaps an accident? It's rare to have all the details – by the time you realise it is happening it is over and you missed the crucial moment – for example, before you heard the impact, you would not have looked in the right direction to notice the car skidding.

Peter was there, very present, with supernatural events unfolding close-up and shining with glory. Even though terrified, and no doubt blinded to some details, he would never forget the moment and how it made him feel. It is therefore interesting that when he tells the story for himself, he leaves out the whole business about the shelters and makes no mention of his confusion and fear. What he focuses on is the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ and the voice of 'Majestic Glory' confirming Jesus as God's Son. Everything else had become insignificant in the light of that glory.

In his re-telling, he speaks of the present darkness and then looks forward to the day that will dawn when the morning star rises in our hearts. For him, and he hopes for his readers, his personal encounter on the mountain confirms this – that Jesus will come again in glory. He should know: he was there!