

Holiness

Many times as a university student, I saw questions in end of semester exams that were similar to questions that I had done in lectures or practiced in study group sessions. They were not the exact questions but they were close enough for me to be confident that my approach to the question in front of me would lead to the correct answer. There were also times in study group sessions where my friends and I saw a question that reminded us of a previously practised question. Sometimes, the group would be split in our decisions regarding the answer to the question. The victor would often be the one that stuck to their guts, remembered the previous question and applied the same concepts to the current one.

The Apostle Peter writes to the church in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). The Church is a minority group with a markedly different belief system and they are under enormous oppression from the Roman majority rule. In addition to that, members of the Church were also being confused by teaching from false teachers. These teachers claimed that the message of the resurrection was fabricated by the apostles. They also twisted the apostle Paul's message of liberation in Christ to mean indulging in any practice that they wanted to, regardless of morality.

Peter claps back at these claims by reminding the readers of the event of the Transfiguration. He recalls seeing wid im uona tuu yai dem, Jesus transform into this glorious being, radiating light to all his surroundings. Peter witnessed the glory of God come down to man in the presence of a cloud and with his own ears heard the approval of God saying “This is my son whom I have chosen. Listen to Him”. Transfiguration is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. The transfiguration of Jesus can be defined as such. He does change into a peculiar being, something unaffiliated with our earthly dimensions. He also communes with the biblical characters Moses and Elijah who are associated with the law and prophecy respectively. However, this peculiar incident poses a problem, a big one! The transfiguration demonstrates the holiness that humanity **ought** to have, that which we **did** have at one point but in reality, **don’t** have anymore. From the time sin came into the world, human beings have had this problem. We have always had to go through some form of ceremonial theatrics in order to be accepted into God’s presence, whether it be cleaning ourselves, having a priest plead our cause or sacrificing an animal. We in our abnormally sinful state would be repelled by the holiness of God’s presence jos laik ail an waata we kyaahn miks. God’s approval could not be justly rendered to us the human race. Luckily, the solution to the

problem lies right in the midst of it. We see where Jesus the human takes on a form of divinity. Jesus who is fully man and fully God, becomes a sort of bridge between the two worlds. Jesus fulfils the law- criteria which showed us why we couldn't enter God's presence. Jesus also fulfils prophecy- utterances of old which promised that a day would come where God's space and our space would be one again.

Given all that "jazz" about the Transfiguration of Christ, the following question arises: Why does Peter mention this event? What significance does it have in proving that Jesus will in fact come again? How will it help a persecuted church from being misguided? The promise of Christ's 2nd coming assures us that there will be a new world, one in which God's space and our space are one. In that world, sin and all of the consequences that come with it will be a thing of the past. Gad a-go liv mongks wi! The event of the transfiguration relates just that to us the readers. It embodies the purpose of the 2nd coming, the reuniting of the human and the divine, the bridging of the two worlds and a New Creation, one in which God is well pleased. Like taking concepts from a previous question to answer a similar one, Peter remembers the Transfiguration and recalls that it is the same transfigured Christ who promised to come again. This is therefore not an Anansi Story but an inevitable reality.

By this, Peter is able to encourage an oppressed church to maintain their core beliefs and resist the immorality and confusion introduced to them.

What does the transfiguration of Christ mean to us? What is its significance in this day and age? How does it fit into God's Church within the Jamaican society? Like the Church in St Peter's time, we still await the second coming of our Lord. We are no longer a minority group per se, even though some of our beliefs are not mainstream. Church in Jamaica has many problems, seen from both the view of the Christian and the non-Christian. Moreso, the general attitude within our society is frankly ugly. The usual behaviour, like the false teaching in Peter's time is one that perceives the 2nd coming as a "Anansi Story". We in our highly religious background as a People never verbally deny the second coming BUT *wi liv laik se Gad naa kom bak!* Chapa kolcha has superseded the dependence on God's provision, *jongl jostis* than that of forgiveness and the manipulation of each other in preference to love. Our society gives lip service to the Kingdom of God, never actually acting on what we collectively claim to believe. This discord puts our society into a state of immorality and confusion. The Church in our society is situated right in the midst of an unholy environment, one which is highly unlikely to be approved by God. God's Church, seems to be in the middle of two realms, the divine that

comes from the encounter with Jesus and the inhumane reality which we are exposed to on a daily basis. We have a problem, a big one!

Luckily, there is a solution! The Church is the Body of Christ and we its individual members have accepted Jesus to live within our hearts. We who have accepted a resurrected and transfigured Jesus have also been transfigured into holiness. The Church, God's Church is a unified, living, breathing example of a transfigured humanity, one that radiates light giving warmth to the people we surround and giving clarity to a world we all hell broke loose. We the "born again" bear the identity of Christ and because of that, we too gain God's approval. We take the hot seat, the place of Christ and in doing so we ascribe to a holy way of life; one that sees ourselves and others as the Image of God. We ascribe to a life that bears cross, sacrificing ourselves and all that we have in service to the Kingdom of God. We plead the cause of the widow and the motherless and demand that justice be rendered to those who cannot seek it for themselves. This is the transfigured life, one in which God is well pleased.

Given all of this, the challenge which you may be presented with is: Does the transfigured life accurately describe what the Church in our society **is** or what it **ought to be**? Is God's Church within the Jamaican context one in which we can confess our sins one to another or is it a house of gossip? Is the Church a

source of comfort for those rejected by society or are they further dragged through the mud by us? Are we fearlessly speaking out against corrupt schemes and lies from the powers that be or do we in cowardice only pray about it? Because holiness is much more than a consistent prayer life...

As God's Church, we must remember where we stand- in the thick of things.

We represent the motive of the second coming; Gods space and our space becoming one again. Like the apostle Peter who remembered the event of the Transfiguration and from that looked towards the second coming, so should those within our reach be hopeful for a redeemed nation and world. By our influence and impact in their lives, they should be able to say "there is still hope because God's Church remains". Our role as a transfigured humanity is to reflect the face of Christ so that those around us may experience His radiance and in return seek to become participants in God's divine nature.

Amen.