

Our Faith: Truth or Fable (Part 1)

II Peter 1:16-18

INTRODUCTION:

If you would open your Bibles this morning, in a few minutes, we will be reading from II Peter Chapter 1 verses 16-18.

Suppose I told you that cell phones give you cancer. What if I told you that this is **NOT** just a small amount of emissions that maybe, possibly, might, someday harm you a little bit. But if you continue to use your cell phone these emissions **WILL** give you cancer! **How would you respond?**

Would you stop using your cell phone? Would you just take my word at face value and smash your phone right then and there? Would you completely adapt to a cell-phone free lifestyle just because I said so? Remember, I'm not a doctor. Just your friendly neighborhood brother in Christ. **So, would you listen?**

I'm guessing you wouldn't. **I'm guessing you would probably give me a funny look, wonder where my marbles went, and ask me what proof I have.** You would want to know if I had a good reason behind my claims or if I'm simply off my rocker.

Let me assure you that there is no need to smash your phones that I know of.

So my next question is—**if you won't do something as relatively simple as give up your cell phone because I said so, how can you expect other people to believe in Jesus just because you say so?**

A phone giving you cancer...that is believable. Our phones probably do have a harmful effect on us that we don't know about. But God being born in human form to a virgin, performing miraculous signs and wonders, dying on a cross, rising from the dead, appearing to many after His death, and ascending to Heaven where He still lives today? **That's much more difficult to believe.**

Peter is going to spend some time telling us how we can BE ASSURED that Christ and our faith is **TRUTH, not FABLE!**

The problem for many people is that a lot of us don't know these reasons. Not only does this leave our faith weaker, but it prevents us from effectively telling others about the Gospel as well, since we lack any sort of compelling argument.

Why should people take your word that Christianity is true? Because your Sunday School teacher said so? Because your experience says so? Because the Bible says so? The Bible is just another book that has been written and passed down by man, right?

The truth is, if you expect people to listen to you when you share your story about Jesus, you need to give them a logical reason to do so.

Beginning with the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, and continuing throughout their preaching and teaching ministries, the apostles used two lines of evidences upon which our faith is to rest.

1. The testimony of the apostles as eyewitnesses.
2. The testimony of the Old Testament prophets.

Even in this Second Epistle, we find Peter referring to these "two lines of evidence" as we consider this morning's text for our study.

All Stand and Read Scripture

2 Peter 1:16-18 (NASB)

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"— ¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

As we prepare to look more closely at Peter's passage this morning, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

BODY:

I. WAS JESUS REAL?.

2 Peter 1:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Peter says that **THEIR TESTIMONY WAS NOT "CUNNINGLY DEvised FABLES"**

It's a question that most of us take for granted, and yet, honestly, I'm not sure there is a more important question we could ever ask. **After all, if Jesus of Nazareth wasn't a real person, everything we believe is nothing more than a fairy tale, a myth, and a waste of time.** Yes, Christianity may make you a better person, but if it isn't true, then what is the point? If eternity in heaven is just a fairy tale, then we just as well "eat, drink, and be merry".

I've been a Christian pretty much my entire life. Honestly, I've never really questioned whether or not Jesus was real or God exists because I grew up believing it to be true. **My parents, preachers, and Sunday School teachers all told me that it was true, and honestly, that was all the proof that God exists that I really needed.**

Now, as an adult, I can see that that is not very good proof. After all, people tell all kinds of stories. the Easter bunny, the tooth fairy, "If you swallow watermelon seeds, they will grow out of your ears." It doesn't mean that they are true.

Peter said that the apostles did not make up "**cleverly devised tales**" concerning Jesus. Jesus was a real person who lived and breathed, performed miracles, rose from the dead, and was God. And Peter said "**We were eyewitnesses of His majesty**".

Peter said Jesus was real, he was an eyewitness. What evidence do we have to validate his claim?

Okay, the first thing you have to realize is that **you cannot ever “prove” with 100 percent certainty that anything ever happened in history.** This includes not only Jesus' existence, but also well-accepted past historical events such as the Civil War, the Holocaust, or even what you had for lunch last week. If you weren't there, you can't know for sure. And even if you were, you can't be sure your memories are correct! There is always a slight chance that the evidence you have was made up or that more evidence may be uncovered that contradicts your current understanding.

What you CAN do, however, is to look at the evidence you DO have and figure out what the best, most logical conclusion would be. And if you have tons of very solid evidence that all points to one conclusion, then you can very safely assume that your conclusion is correct, even if you know that you can't prove it 100 percent.

We were not alive during the Civil War, yet we believe that it actually did happen. We have written accounts in newspapers and other historical documents that tell about events that happened during the war. Not all of the writings will be 100% accurate. There will be some conflicting accounts depending on that authors point of view and biases. But when you put all of the historical evidence together, it is compelling that the Civil War did exist and that the Union armies prevailed.

I do not have time in this message to present the historical facts, but when we look at the writings in the Bible, the historical evidence from non-biblical writings of believers, and especially the historical non-biblical writings of nonbelievers, we find that the historical proof is there that Jesus did exist. There is so much written about Him that there is no doubt that He lived.

II. THE "EYEWITNESSES".

2 Peter 1:16b-18 (NASB)

16 ...but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Who can tell me which event Peter was referring to? **Pause**

The transfiguration of Christ.

Peter was a fisherman. One day he met Jesus and his whole life was changed. He got to experience watching Jesus perform miracles. This was something that no ordinary man could do and it confirmed that what Jesus was doing and teaching was from God. That was the purpose of the miracles.

- This Jesus taught like no one had ever taught before.
- He fed thousands with just a little food.
- He healed the sick and He raised the dead.
- He even convinced Peter that he could walk on water.
- It was enough to make even the most hardened fisherman take notice.

But one miraculous event, the transfiguration, really got Peter's attention and appears to have been a pivotal influence on his life. This event occurred just six days after Jesus had revealed for the first time to the disciples that He was going to be killed and be raised again on the third day. We read about it in Matthew...

Matthew 17:1-8 (NASB)

The Transfiguration

17 Six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and *led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ² And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; **listen to Him!**" ⁶ When the disciples heard *this*, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. ⁷ And Jesus came to *them* and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." ⁸ And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

Undoubtedly, the purpose of the transfiguration of Christ into at least a part of His heavenly glory was so that the "inner circle" of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, could gain a greater understanding of who Jesus was. Christ underwent a dramatic change in appearance in order that the disciples could behold Him in His glory. The disciples, who had only known Him in His human body, now had a greater realization of the deity of Christ, though they could not fully comprehend it. That gave them the reassurance they needed after hearing the shocking news of His coming death.

Symbolically, the appearance of Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets. But God's voice from heaven – "**Listen to Him!**" - clearly showed that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. The One who is the new and living way is replacing the old. He is the fulfillment of the Law and the countless prophecies in the Old Testament.

Peter, James, and John never forgot what happened that day on the mountain and no doubt this was intended.

John wrote in his gospel,

John 1:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And Peter here says that he actually heard this voice from God and saw the glory of Christ!

Can you imagine the magnificence of this event? No wonder it stuck in his mind!

Now, here is Peter, old, tested, seasoned, sanctified, and he is able to stand with the inner circle and say, "We were with Him when He spoke with Moses and Elijah. We heard God's voice. We got a sneak preview of the glorified Jesus. This is not a tall tale. We were there"!

I want you to know that when you read this letter of the Apostle Peter, you are reading a firsthand account of an eyewitness, who soon after was crucified upside down for preaching the very things he said here. You can believe it. You can base your life on the validity of it. People don't make things like this up and then **die for the lie!**

Those who witnessed the transfiguration bore witness to it to the other disciples and to countless millions down through the centuries.

There were also many witnesses of Christ outside of the apostles. These were people who had seen his miracles. They had been fed by Christ, healed by Christ, and even raised from the dead. Many had actually seen Christ die on the cross. Paul tells us that Christ appeared to many people, including over 500 brethren at one time, after He had risen from the dead.

Now, if these things had not occurred, when the apostles started preaching the Gospel, the people would have ridiculed them and called them liars. But, since many of them had actually seen these things, they did not refute the events that the apostles were talking about. And because many of them were miraculous events, they could also accept the teachings because the miracles confirmed them as being from God. And thus the Gospel was spread and many believed. Its message was so powerful, that it still continues today.

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION:

The story is told about a young boy who gave his grandmother a Bible for Christmas. He wanted to write something special on the cover but wasn't sure what to say.

So he decided to copy what he had seen in a book that was highly valued by his father.

Christmas morning came and his grandmother opened her gift. She was not only pleased to receive the Bible, but she was amused by the inscription in it. It read: "To Grandma, with compliments of the author."

Even though the boy was unaware of it, he suggested a unique fact about the Bible. It came to us from its author, God.

The apostle Paul wrote,

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NASB)

¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Knowing who wrote a book often determines whether we'll pick it up and read it. The Bible, with its divine origin, not only ought to be read, but it demands our respect, our trust, and our obedience. It comes to us "with compliments of the Author."

What makes me a Christian is believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and obeying and living the teachings that is contained in this book. Jesus Christ is the central figure of this Book. It bares testimony that He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, worked miracles, died on a cross for man's sins, bodily rose from the grave, and ascended into Heaven.

This is not a fable of deliberately invented events. The Apostles and Prophets, are not fabricators, frauds and liars. I believe this is the Holy Word of God! Written by holy men! Written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit! Written so we can know how to be saved from this sinful world.

Peter and the rest of the apostles really leave us with only two possibilities.

Either they are telling the truth about Jesus...

Or they did the very thing that Peter denied in this passage: "**followed cleverly devised tales**"!

Which is more reasonable, to believe the apostles told the truth, or were blatant liars, frauds, and deceivers?

Based upon the lives they lived, the suffering they endured to teach and live the Christian life, and the scriptures they left behind, and the acceptance of their contemporaries, there is only one reasonable conclusion...

They were in fact "Eyewitnesses of His majesty"!

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

He is Lord!